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by

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Abstract

The European War of 1914 to 1918 inspired a large amount of poetry in each of the three languages under consideration, English, French and German. The thesis suggests reasons for the popularity of the lyric in the war years, as part of an analysis of the function of the poetry in its historical period. Contrary to the accepted practice amongst critics of the English writing, the poetry is classified by intent rather than by the poets' attitude towards the war, for the poems fall easily into two groups, "public" (or propagandist) and "personal." In the former, the poem is directed outward, towards a specific audience, while the personal poet's efforts centre on his verse for its own, or for his own, sake. The thesis deals only with the type of poetry in which function is especially important, namely, the public.

Characteristic of all the public poetry are a spokesman _persona_ and a tone of animosity towards an alien group, deliberately excluded from the circle of the poet's implied readers. In poetry which is designed to generate patriotism, this "implied non-reader" is the official enemy; when the poet's propaganda is in the so-called anti-war

cause, the antagonism is directed against all perpetuators of the patriotic-heroic myth. Patriotic verse shows a high degree of international homogeneity, especially in the almost invariable selection of a first person plural voice. Protest poetry is more diverse, although most poems involve one of three formats--direct argument, after the manner of a debate, a realistic narrative juxtaposed against some aspect of the myth, or an elaborate visionary image showing war in its true light. Realism alone is rarely a protest device. The usual impression conveyed by critics of the English war poetry, that most protest poets were male, on active service, and given to realistic description, is shown to have been false, even in England.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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I. Introduction

The European war of 1914 to 1918, the Great War, has taken on symbolic value with the passage of time, as a turning-point in the social development of many of the combatant countries, as the end of an era, the beginning of the modern age, the loss of "innocence." The four years of the war, in which at least ten million people, mostly men and mostly young, lost their lives, and many millions more were injured physically and mentally, are often looked back upon as if they represented a single temporal unit, with a distinctive "before" and "after." However, the amazingly large number of written records that remain of those years, in the form of news reports, diaries, letters, memoirs, poems, histories and novels, serve as a permanent reminder that the war was in fact a long series of moments, to be endured, sometimes enjoyed, recorded, remembered, or perhaps deliberately forgotten. Those moments were, obviously, periods of time like any other, and the changes the war effected in the societies involved, and in individuals who survived, a part of a continuum of development; yet in a sense the war remains encapsulated, cut off by its extraordinariness from past and future, as many contemporary and later writers acknowledged. To the extent that it is a response to the events and situations of those four tumultuous years, the war poetry, too, is a thing apart, bounded by the time-frame of the war itself (since relatively few poems on the subject were written after 1918), and interrelated unusually closely with the historical moment that inspired it. Michael Hamburger writes of the difficulty of distinguishing, in the modern period, between war poetry and any other kind, "since peace has become a sequence of limited wars, either political or military,"[1] but, while his claim is probably valid in general, the poetry on the subject of the conflict of 1914 to 1918 is so totally "possessed by war" (to use Simone Weil's phrase) as to be quite distinctive.[2]

All literary works are a product of their age, if only in the sense that the language and literary conventions which they employ are engaged at a specific moment of development, a moment which is given permanence by the work in question. However, some writing is located especially firmly in the period which produced it, where authors have chosen to write in a direct way about contemporary events and the social situation. Although such an approach is more prevalent in fiction and drama, it is by no means unusual for lyric poets to comment in their writing on contemporary affairs--one thinks of some poems of Dante and Petrarch, of

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[1] The Truth of Poetry (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p. 164.

[2] The Iliad or The Poem of Force (Wallingford: Pendle Hill, 1970), p. 25.

Walther von der Vogelweide's political verse, of Shelley and Wordsworth. At the same time, it is uncommon to find such a large body of poetry so firmly implanted in its historical context as that which the Great War inspired. Whether it deals with the war from a political, a military, or a social viewpoint, its historicity is evident in descriptions of the extraordinary world of reality which combatants encountered, in the preponderance of technical terms like "whizz-bangs" and "salients," in the recurrence of names such as Louvain and Emden, which signify little to modern readers, but which obviously carried a considerable weight of meaning to audiences in 1914, and in the special vocabulary of poetic expressions, for which one critic even provides a gloss.[3] As regards technique, this poetry arose at the point at which the traditional made its last strong stand against the modern, and there is little doubt that the war hastened the demise of nineteenth-century poetic conventions, when it "dis-established" amongst the literati the social attitudes which traditional verse had expressed "pro patria."[4] The poetry is time-bound, too, in the sense that, to a considerable degree, it was written as propaganda for a specific "real-life" audience, with the result that many of the poems cannot now be read without making allowance for viewpoints which prevailed at the time. Even the format of publication was determined to an unusually large extent by the historical moment, and remains important when one is assessing the poetry. It is significant, for instance, that thousands of the poems first appeared in daily newspapers, that others--though relatively fewer in number--were printed in small literary magazines with an anti-war leaning, or that numerous anthologies were produced in pocket-sized editions, especially for use by "the troops."

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[3] Paul Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory, (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975), p. 22.

[4] Even the relatively modern Symbolist poets in France were rejected, as Philippe Audoin explains in Les Surréalistes (Paris: Seuil, 1973): "La plupart des écrivains que ces jeunes gens admiraient dans leur adolescence avaient plus ou moins mis leur plume au service de 'l'effort de guerre'" (p. 10). "Les futurs surréalistes ne songeaient pas à prolonger un mouvement dont les représentants les plus en vue s'étaient si gravement compromis avec la débilité martiale" (p. 14).

There is no doubt that many of the Great War poems cannot be appreciated, or even understood, without a minimal knowledge of their historical background, and this dependence may lead to a questioning both of their value to the modern reader, and of the worth to literary scholarship of a study which is potentially as much concerned with history as with literature. In defence of the poems, one may justifiably claim that, while the majority are interesting only as indicators of facets of literary or social history, many still appeal aesthetically to a substantial number of readers. Contrary to the prognostication of Sir Henry Newbolt in 1924--"I don't think these shell-shocked war poems will move our grandchildren greatly"[5]--succeeding generations have found something of value in the work of Wilfred Owen and other protest poets. Possibly their appeal lies in the continuing importance of their message in a world where the threat of war is omnipresent, and where still, as in 1914, "der Chauvinismus ist die ständige Lebensgefahr der Menschheit,"[6] or perhaps it rests in the fact that

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[5] Letter to Lady Hylton, quoted by John Press, A Map of English Poetry (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), p. 147.

> . . . whatever moans in man
> Before the last sea and the hapless stars;
> Whatever mourns when many leave these shores;
> Whatever shares
> The eternal reciprocity of tears,"

is, as Owen's lines suggest, a constant.[7]

Ultimately it is the poet's skill in using words which causes his message to strike a responsive chord in readers of periods other than his own, and even decidedly "minor" poems often contain a line or a phrase of "god-given" verse, which can speak to generations no longer attuned to the conventions of the moment.[8] For example, a poem of which the author identifies himself only as H. D'A. B. opens with the lines

> The dead lie in Givenchy field
> As lie the sodden autumn leaves.[9]

Because in the first line the poet uses the phrase "the dead" rather than, for instance, the more realistic word "corpses," and because the term "field" contains a suggestion of archaic warfare, one is inclined to anticipate a comment in the traditional idealist manner about glorious death and honour. However, the second line, through the strength of both the visual impact and the multiple implications of its simile, shatters those expectations and completely denies honour and glory as concomitants of death. Dead soldiers are seen as discarded, decomposing objects, and the significance of human death is equated only with natural decay. The effect of the poet's words, with the tension between the first and second lines, has a validity far beyond "Givenchy field," or beyond any war, and it would be a pity if such lines as these were to waste away completely on the shelves of "special collections," when they are retrievable in the context of other poems on the same theme.

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[6] Franz Pfemfert, "Die Besessenen," Die Aktion, 1. August 1914, p. 672.

[7] "Insensibility," Collected Poems, ed. C. Day Lewis (London: Chatto and Windus, 1971), p. 38.

[8] The reference is to Valéry's statement that "Les dieux, gracieusement, nous donnent pour rien tel premier vers; mais c'est à nous de façonner le second, qui doit... ne pas être indigne de son aîné surnaturel." "Au sujet d'Adonis," Oeuvres (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), I, 42.

[9] Soldier Poets: Songs of the Fighting Men (London: E. Macdonald, 1916), p. 14.

As for the problem of a supposedly literary study on a subject inextricably bound up with its historical background, it is obvious that most critics of Great War poetry have encountered, though not necessarily identified, the same difficulty. Much criticism of the work of individual poets reads like biography, and attitudes inherent in the poetry are frequently extrapolated and treated as sociological phenomena--by Ronald Peacock, for instance, whose essay "The Great War in German Lyrical Poetry" attempts, through the evidence of the poetry, "to disclose the intricate workings and effects of war . . . on the mind and spirit of a nation."[10] The drawback to an approach like Peacock's is that the basis of criticism, the sociological plane which one is attempting to establish, is non-literary, and no allowance is made for the extent to which the response is governed by the conventions of literature. Biographical criticism is similarly in danger of overlooking what should be self-evident--namely that poets write poetry and not, for instance, news reports or autobiography. Admittedly it is difficult in reading the poetry to disregard editorial "asides" like "Killed in action, 1 July 1916" or "Drei Tage vor seinem Tod geschrieben," but the critic must recognise that such comments are not an integral part of the poem.

The insistence upon collating the facts of a poet's life with criticism of his verse demands, at the very least, factual accuracy, with the result that, when the case is found to rest on faulty evidence, the criticism is completely invalidated. For instance, Bernard Bergonzi's statement concerning Edward Thomas' poetry, that Thomas "found a therapeutic and sanative value in contemplating nature, or remembering rural England, in the midst of violence and destruction," is rendered pointless by the recognition (to which Bergonzi admits in the second edition of his book) that all of Thomas' surviving poetry had been written before he came face to face with the violence.[11] Patrick Bridgwater makes a similar false assumption in maintaining that the German poet Wilhelm Klemm "was opposed to the war from the beginning."[12] An unprejudiced reading of the poems indicates that, although Klemm was aware of the unpleasant realities of the battlefield, "von 'Kritik' kaum die Rede sein kann," as Uwe Wandrey observes.[13] In actuality, a recent monograph on Klemm presents evidence that, far from being "opposed to the war," the poet was, and remained, enthusiastically committed to his country's cause.[14]

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[10] Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, 3 (1934), p. 192.

In the 1980 preface to Heroes' Twilight, Bergonzi observes that his book now seems to him methodologically "remarkably simple, even naive, in the way in which it combines bits of proper history, literary history and biography with close analysis of poems and prose passages."[15] As he says, "The problems of relating the texts of literature and the texts of history now loom larger and more dauntingly," although it is to be noted that by no means all recent critics are so perceptive. For example, Andrew Motion's The Poetry of Edward Thomas, published in

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[11] Heroes' Twilight: A Study of the Literature of the Great War (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1980), p. 85; p. 91.

[12] "German Poetry and the First World War," European Studies Review, 1 (1971), 166.

[13] Das Motiv des Krieges in der expressionistischen Lyrik (Hamburg: Hartmut Ludke, 1972), p. 243.

[14] Hanns-Josef Ortheil, Wilhelm Klemm: Ein Lyriker der "Menschheitsdämmerung" (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1979), especially p. 30, p. 51.

[15] Heroes' Twilight, p. 10.

1980 and, if one may judge from the title, intended as a work of criticism rather than biography, has as three of its five chapter-headings, "Biographical," "Patriot and Poet," and "Friend and Countryman,"[16] while Hilda D. Spear's Remembering, We Forget (1979) sets out to show by means of journals and letters that what the war poets said was "a true reflection of men's thoughts and feelings."[17] In spite of developments in literary theory over recent decades, the temptation towards free intermingling of textual and extra-textual elements, and towards reading the poems as historical documents, obviously remains strong.

The present thesis is undertaken with a full awareness that one is not dealing with historical documentation but with literary discourse, and, therefore, with a special and complex relationship between words and empirical facts, and between writer and reader. The general purpose of the study is to examine characteristics of Great War poetry from several countries and from a large number of writers, with the aim of trying to identify some of the ways in which the poetry may have "functioned," for author and reader, in contemporary society. Although the research covered the war poetry at large, the thesis concentrates on the type of writing of which the "function" is particulary important, namely, that which was apparently designed as propaganda for or against the war. By its very nature, Great War poetry forces one outside the text into the literary and social context, and the attempt to understand its functioning leads readily into such fields as the history of public education, the war poetry of previous centuries and the psychological effects of trench warfare, as well as the contemporary literary scene and the history of the war itself. However, the poetic texts remain central, and they, not letters or journals or biographies, are the source of information about the poets' reaction to the war and the purpose of their writing. Extra-textual material is an essential part of the study, but its purpose here is not to prove that poetry may be read as history. Instead, it is used as a counter-balance against that "historical" tendency, by emphasising the role of literary tradition and convention in giving shape to the poetic response.

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[16] London, Boston and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

[17] London: Davis-Poynter, p. 14. It is hard to appreciate, when Spear writes concerning shell-shock (p. 123), "Sergeant Hoad's apparent madness followed a moment of close proximity to an exploding shell (the splinter-scratch could have been incidental)," that the subject of her physiological "case-study" is a character in a poem, Edmund Blunden's "Pillbox" [The Poems of Edmund Blunden (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1930), p.157]. One is tempted to add that the splinter-scratch could also have been a figment of the poet's imagination--as, indeed, could the whole scene.

However, there is no doubt that some background knowledge of the war is, as Jon Silkin observes, "inescapable."[18] After sixty years there is still debate about the causes of the Great War and the purposes for which it was fought. Even if one accepts--though a noted historian, A. J. P. Taylor, does not agree--that "It was a system of alliances and the changing balance of military power in Europe that converted a Balkan dispute into a world war,"[19] Robert Southey's comment on another military conflict, the battle of Blenheim in 1704, may well seem the most appropriate: "But what they fought each other for, / I cannot well make out." The "Balkan dispute," which resulted from the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary and his wife in Bosnia by a Serb nationalist, was followed, though not without a few weeks' delay, by threats and counterthreats and posturings from one country after another, and a chain-reaction of mobilisation which culminated in the German decision to attack France by way of Belgium (since German military plans drawn up long beforehand dictated that route), thus providing Britain with an excuse to enter the fray, to the defence of the neutrality of that small and beleaguered country, or possibly of her Channel ports.

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[18] Out of Battle (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972), p. 341.

Of the "inescapable" historical facts, two are of particular importance--the fervour with which most people in the combatant countries greeted the war, and the "stalemate" situation of trench warfare. Enthusiasm for the war--not merely acceptance of an unpleasant necessity, but a positive and sometimes joyful commitment--apparently overrode differences of age, political opinion, and socio-economic class. Some of the most eager volunteers for military service were young intellectuals. Leaders of the international Socialist movement, which had been gaining strength in the pre-war years, were horrified to find their vision of European solidarity disappearing as workers voluntarily realigned themselves with the cause of their own nation.[20] There were few "protesting voices" to be heard in August 1914, possibly because most people assumed that, like the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, this conflict would be over in a matter of weeks or months, and also, perhaps, because no-one had any conception of how the combination of traditional methods and new technology would make this war far more horrible than any before.

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[19] Laurence Lafore, The Long Fuse (Philadelphia: J.B.Lippencott, 1965), p. 17.

The capability of both sides to move large numbers of troops quickly by rail or even by motorised vehicle contributed to the "deadlock" situation which characterised especially the war in the west. The armies on the Western Front--Belgium and the border between France and Germany--were deadlocked from November 1914 until well into 1918. Each side established strong defences, mostly in the form of trenches, and attempts to break through this line of defence accomplished only minor changes in position at the cost of an enormous number of men--20,000 British troops were killed on the first day of the Somme offensive, July 1, 1916. Life in the trenches was a semi-troglodyte existence, and the soldiers had to accustom themselves to rain and cold, to the unusually close company of other people, to the presence of rats, of human remains, and of an invisible enemy similarly entrenched, perhaps less than a hundred yards away.[21] Attacks were preceded by a heavy bombardment designed to destroy the enemy's front line and his artillery, an aim which was rarely achieved. Instead, the effect of the bombardment was to make the No-Man's-Land between the trenches almost impassable, with the result that the attacking troops tended to be caught in a position of no escape. Unfortunately the military leaders responsible for strategy believed firmly in the value of the offensive, even when its success was obviously limited, so the futile destruction continued until one side, by weight of numbers, drove the other back.

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[20] Marcel Martinet's "Tu vas te battre" exemplifies their feelings in poetry. Les Temps maudits (Paris: Union Générale d'Editions, 1975), pp. 55-60.

On the Eastern Front, that is to say, anywhere on the long border which Germany and Austria-Hungary shared with Russia and her allies to the south (Romania, Serbia), the conflict was, potentially at least, more mobile and capable of being conducted on a traditional pattern, with the deployment of cavalry and more evidence of advance and retreat. It is interesting to note that the difference between the two fronts is reflected in some of the German poetry. For instance, cavalry poems were written mainly by combatants who, as biographical information shows, were engaged on the Eastern Front, and the poetry from the east usually offers a less restricted view of nature than the typical "earth and sky" of the western trenches. That there are many more references to snow in the German war-poetry than in that of the other two languages under discussion is probably also a reflection of the realities of Eastern Front involvement, but it is worth noting that poems about winter have a strong place in the German literary "consciousness," through, for example, Goethe's "Harzreise" and Müller's "Winterreise" cycle. In English, perhaps less surprisingly, poetry written by combatants in the Middle East (where Turkey had taken up arms on the German side) proves to be equally distinctive, not merely because sand and flies rather than mud and rats are the bane of the soldiers, but because the poets often adopt what they consider to be an Eastern attitude towards fate and death--exemplified in R. B. Marriott-Watson's "Kismet."[22] The campaign in the eastern Mediterranean, especially an unsuccessful attempt to land troops at Gallipoli, drew a substantial number of English poems of protest against ineffectual decision-makers; however, it also provided many combatant poets with Homeric parallels to their own situation.

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[21] See Tony Ashworth, Trench Warfare 1914-1918 (London: Macmillan, 1980).

Navies played an important part in the war, though less through direct battles than through blockades and harassment of merchant shipping. The German cruiser Emden ran a particularly successful campaign in the Indian Ocean, and is widely celebrated in German poetry. Although the British Grand Fleet was in a position of power, and succeeded in minimising German access to much-needed supplies, the German secret weapon, the U-boat, proved extremely effective in causing trouble in the North Sea and the North Atlantic. U-boats in general, or single famous ones like U9, are the subject of many poems, either celebrating their success (if the poet happened to write in German) or deploring them as unfair (if his language was French or English). The British secret weapon, the tank, was decidedly less successful than the U-boat, and it received very little attention from poets. Amongst the thousands of poems read in connection with this study, the only example to be found in its praise was Capitaine Marcel Blin's "Les Tanks."[23] While it is possible that the disparity arises from the fact that tanks were introduced at a relatively late stage in the war, the obvious parallel between U-boats and various underwater creatures in mythology throughout the world probably plays some part. Perhaps because the idea of flying has also been a human pre-occupation since ancient times, aerial warfare captured the collective imagination to a degree far in excess of its actual use. Bombing raids were relatively few, but were sufficient to evoke poems from both potential victims and, in at least one case, Paul Bewsher's "Nox

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[22] Brian Gardner, ed., Up the Line to Death (London: Eyre Methuen, 1976), p. 86.

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[23] *La Réplique des Jeunes 1914-1918* (Orléans: N.P., [1919]), p. 97.

Mortis," the perpetrator, deploring the idea that death can "pour / Down from the sky."[24] However, most of the poems about the war in the air take a positive view, celebrating the joy of flying and welcoming the opportunity for a type of heroism much more like that of the days of chivalry.

The poetry under consideration in general is that of which, in a direct way, some aspect of the Great War is the subject-matter. The major advantage of a thematic classification of this kind is that it allows a ready means of placing the parameters of one's field, and, in the present case, renders unnecessary the task of trying to formulate a definition of war-poetry. It may be argued that a subject-matter distinction is arbitrary, and it is indeed extremely likely that all writers who were at work during the years 1914-18, and immediately afterwards, in the combatant countries, were influenced in their writing by the fact of the war. It is convenient, however, to be able to avoid discussion about, for instance, whether Pound's comments on the war as expressed in the _Cathay_ poems are as valid as those of Owen, simply by insisting that, whatever he may have had in mind, Pound did not write about contemporary Flanders but about ancient China.[25] (It is also useful to bear in mind, _vis-à-vis_ purists who would include all war-time poetry in such a study, that some of Hugh Lofting's Doctor Doolittle stories for children were written in the trenches, yet it is doubtful whether any critic would feel impelled to consider them as war literature.) A further advantage of restricting the poetry by subject-matter is that one eliminates de facto the need for any time constraint. While novels and drama on the subject of the Great War are still being written sixty years later, the flow of poetry appears almost to have dried up as soon as the war ended, to the extent that the few exceptions can be included in the study without threatening to become burdensome. Apart from a few retrospective poems like Sassoon's "Everyone Sang" and "Have You Forgotten Yet?" or Herbert Read's "The End of a War," more recent verse which refers to the Great War is mostly concerned with perceptions of the war, rather than with the conflict itself--Keith Douglas's "Desert Flowers" ("Rosenberg I only repeat what you were saying"), for example, Adrian Henri's "Great War Poems," Peter Porter's "Somme and Flanders," or Philip Larkin's "MCMXIV," which gives the impression of having been inspired by photographs.[26]

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[24] _The Bombing of Bruges_ (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1918), p. 46.

[25] Hugh Kenner describes the _Cathay_ poems as "among the most durable of all poetic responses to World War I." _The Pound Era_ (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 201-202.

As the basis of an international study, the choice of a constant theme is particularly useful, in that it allows one to see in clear perspective the remaining variables. While the temptation is always to look for contrasts, what is particularly striking in the present case is the enormous similarity of writing amongst poets in the different language-groups. There is especially a high degree of correlation between the authors' attitude towards the war and their position within the poetic tradition of their language. It is ironic that the poetry which sets out to emphasise divergences amongst the nations should be the most similar from one country to another, in terms of technique, vocabulary and general tone. On the other hand, there are undoubtedly differences which reflect national concerns, history, and, especially, literary traditions. Ideally, an international study of the war poetry would encompass writing from all the combatant countries, but the language-barrier makes such universality impossible. For the most part, only the more famous works of major authors have been translated, while the nature of the present study requires that one have access to poetry of both great and small reputation (or of no reputation at all). A further difficulty arises from the fact that a considerable amount of the research in preparation for the thesis involved the reading of contemporary magazines, which are usually available only in the original language. In any case, it cannot be denied that poetry loses much of its worth in all but the most gifted translation. The study therefore deals only with poetry in the languages of three of the main groups of combatants--English, French and German--omitting with regret such poets as Ungaretti, Mayakovsky and Khlebnikov. Meanwhile, it should not be overlooked that national differences may be detected in the poetry of people writing in the same language--French and Belgian, for instance, or Irish and English.

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[26] "Desert Flowers," Charles Hamblett, ed., I Burn For England (London: Leslie Frewin, 1966), p. 98; "Great War Poems," The Mersey Sound (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 24; "Somme and Flanders," Alan Bold, ed., The Martial Muse (Exeter: Wheaton-Pergamon, 1976), p. 113; "MCMXIV," ibid., pp. 162-63.

In the past two decades, after many years of relative neglect, English poetry of the Great War has received considerable attention from critics. Biographical and critical studies of the more important individual poets have been produced--Welland and Stallworthy on Owen, Lane on Owen and Sassoon, Thorpe on Sassoon, Harold Owen's three-volume biography of his brother, Cohen and Liddiard on Rosenberg, and Hassall and Pearsall on Brooke, to name a few.[27] There are also several full-length works of criticism on the war poetry in general: amongst them, J. H. Johnston's provocative study _English Poetry of the First World War_ appeared in 1964, Bernard Bergonzi's _Heroes' Twilight_, dealing with prose writers as well as poets, in 1965, Jon Silkin's _Out of Battle_ in 1972, and Paul Fussell's "Inquiry into the Curious Literariness of Real Life," _The Great War and Modern Memory_, in 1975. In addition to new editions of the writings of individual poets, including the long-neglected Ivor Gurney, there are at least three recent general anthologies. Brian Gardner's _Up the Line to Death_

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[27] Full references for these books, and for the titles mentioned on the next few pages, are to be found in the bibliography.

(1967) and I. M. Parsons' Men Who March Away (1966)--in both of which the poems are grouped thematically--attempt to give an indication of the broad range of poetry engendered by the war, while Jon Silkin in The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry (1979) concentrates on the work of a few poets, and his criterion, he states, is "excellence."[28] Observing that a substantial number of war poets were women, yet that very few were represented in modern anthologies, Catherine W. Reilly drew up a selection of women's poems of the Great War, published in 1981 under the title (a quotation from a poem by Vera Brittain) Scars Upon My Heart.[29]

In France, the war poetry as such appears to have been ignored almost totally by critics, apart from a few magazine articles written before about 1920. Only that by poeple known for their earlier or later work has received more than passing reference, and even in the case of famous poets their war-poetry is usually dismissed as unimportant, with probably the single exception of Apollinaire. There were a few post-war anthologies, such as the five-volume Anthologie des ecrivains morts a la guerre (1924) and Les Poetes contre la guerre (1920), but very little of the poetry has been reprinted, and some of it, like P.-J. Jouve's war-time writings, has actually been suppressed by the author. The only gleam of light for the survival of the French war poetry lies in the fact that Marcel Martinet's Les Temps

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[28] The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry (London: Allen Lane, 1979), p. 72.

[29] Scars Upon My Heart (London: Virago, 1981).

maudits has been reissued recently, and that Jules Romains' *unanimiste* movement has attracted some scholarly interest.[30] A few French poems are to be found translated in Silkin's Penguin anthology, in Bertram Lloyd's two collections, *The Paths of Glory* and *Poems Written During the Great War*, and in the tri-lingual *Ohne Hass und Fahne*, published in 1959.[31]

In Germany there was wide interest in the poetry during and immediately after the war, instigated to a large extent by Julius Bab, who edited a series of twelve anthologies, all under the title *1914: Das deutsche Krieg im deutschen Gedicht*, between September 1914 and 1919, wrote articles for the journal *Das literarische Echo*, and compiled a bibliography, *Die deutsche Kriegslyrik, 1914-1918*.[32] The latter was published in 1920, augmented with reprints of the articles and short chapters on the work of individual poets. Interest in the war poetry was revived in the 1930's, under the influence of National Socialism. This period reveals, rather surprisingly, a concern not only with the work of the German war poets, but also with those in France and other countries; examples are Ernst Hardt's 1939 selection, in

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[30] For example, Michel Décaudin, "Etudes sur la poésie française contemporaine, IV: Destin de l'unanimisme," *L'Information littéraire*, 19 (1967), 156-65; B. F. Stolztfus, "Unanimism Revisited," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 21 (1960), 239-45. Romains' *Europe* was reissued in 1960.

[31] Wolfgang Deppe, Christopher Middleton and Herbert Schönherr, eds. (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1959).

[32] Since Bab's anthologies have neither an index nor tables of contents, the tables and index compiled to facilitate my research are reproduced as an appendix to the thesis.

Neue Rundschau, of translations of "Gedichte von gefallenen Franzosen aus dem Weltkrieg," and W. J. Hartmann's book, appearing in the same year, called Sie alle fielen: Gedichte europaischer Soldaten, which consisted of translations into German of poems by writers from seven countries. An otherwise very useful anthology from the same period, Ernst Volkmann's Deutsche Dichtung im Weltkrieg, published in 1934 in the "Politische Reihe" of the series "Deutsche Literatur . . . in Entwicklungsreihen," is marred by the fact that the editor excludes as a matter of policy poems opposed to the war.[33] Herbert Cysarz was apparently more impartial in the chapter devoted to poets in Zur Geistesgeschichte des Weltkriegs (1931), as was Ronald Peacock in his paper "The Great War in German Lyrical Poetry," published in 1934. Although it was omitted from major anthologies, the war poetry of the more famous Expressionist poets has been kept alive by scholarly interest in this literary movement. For instance, Martin Reso's 1969 anthology, Expressionismus: Lyrik, has a long section of war poems. There is also evidence of renewed interest in other individual poets whose reputation was made by their war poetry--Wilhelm Klemm, for instance, the subject of Hanns-Josef Ortheil's 1979 monograph, and the Arbeiterpoet Heinrich Lersch. Patrick

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[33] Volkmann writes in his introduction, "Der Vorstand der Gesellschaft 'Deutsche Literatur' war sich mit den Herausgebern und dem Bearbeiter darin einig, dass es heute nicht angebracht wäre, auch die Gruppe 'Dichtung der Kriegsgegner' in dieser Sammlung neuerlich zu Wort kommen zu lassen." Deutsche Dichtung im Weltkrieg (Leipzig: Reclam, 1934), p. 48.

Bridgwater has translated a selection of German poems of the war into English, and has written a useful essay about them,[34] and Uwe Wandrey's Das Motif des Krieges in der expressionistischen Lyrik (1972) explores the recurrence of the war motif in writing of the period from 1910 to 1920.

There are at least two recent works which give consideration to the war poetry as an international phenomenon. C. M. Bowra's 1961 Taylorian Lecture Poetry and the First World War, published as a thirty-five page monograph, is necessarily only an overview, and is unfortunately marred by minor inaccuracies--the year of Georg Heym's death is given as 1913 instead of 1912, F. T. Marinetti is supplied with the wrong forename, and the words "in Schilf" in Heym's poem "Der Krieg" are mistranslated as "on the shelves"--all of which leaves one slightly uncomfortable about accepting other "facts."[35] Bowra also touches briefly but more profoundly upon the war poetry in the chapter "Prophets and Seers" in Poetry and Politics (1966). Michael Hamburger devotes a chapter of The Truth of Poetry to "Internationalism and War." In it he places the "modernist" war poetry in the context of other poetic developments in the early years of the century, and draws its link with both the political verse of the 1930s and the poetry of the Second World War. Both Hamburger and

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[34] "German Poems of the 1914-18 War," The Journals of Pierre Menard, 3 (July 1969); "German Poetry and the First World War," European Studies Review, 1 (1971), pp. 147-186.

[35] Poetry and the First World War (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961), p. 4; p. 13; p. 5.

Bowra look for similarities from one country to another, unlike an earlier critic, Harvey C. Grumbine, who was anxious to prove differences. His Humanity or Hate -- Which? published in 1917, was intentional propaganda aimed at convincing the author's fellow-Americans that they were right in joining the war on the French side. In spite of his obviously biased title, Grumbine's preface is a thoughtful study of the religious attitudes revealed in French and German patriotic poetry of the war, and he provides translations of a substantial selection of poems from each language. Apart from Grumbine's book, W. J. Hartmann's Sie alle fielen appears to be the only deliberately international collection devoted exclusively to poems of the Great War, although the tri-lingual Ohne Hass und Fahne (an anthology of anti-war poems of this century) includes about thirty, and some other anthologists have made a gesture towards internationalism by introducing a few poems from other countries--Silkin in the Penguin anthology (1979), for instance, and Bertram Lloyd, whose two volumes of anti-"cant" poems were published in 1918 and 1919.[36]

Whatever may be said in literary-critical circles about the quality of much of the poetry of the Great War, (and even an enthusiast must admit that by far the larger part is definitely "minor"), no-one can deny the impressiveness of its quantity. The 1921 catalogue of a collection donated to the Birmingham Public Libraries lists twelve hundred different titles of anthologies and individual volumes in English and over two hundred in French; Jean Vic's bibliography (1927) of war-time publications in French includes about two hundred and fifty poetry titles, of which only about half are in the Birmingham collection; and Julius Bab's bibliography of German poetry of the World War (1920) lists some four hundred and fifty individual works, but leaves out the numerous anthologies. The German book-trade catalogue for the years 1915-1919 has well over a thousand entries in the category "Weltkrieg: Gedichte," including no fewer than six collections of "Aufschriften an Eisenbahnwagen, Unterständen u. dergleichen."[37] None of these lists takes into account material which may have been written during the war but published later than, say, 1920. The Birmingham collection also includes several large "scrap-book" volumes of poems clipped from newspapers and magazines, some of them not published elsewhere. A recent bibliography of the English poetry, compiled by Catherine Reilly, includes the names of well over two thousand writers, and Julius Bab estimated that one and a half million war poems were written in German in August 1914.[38] (An anonymous writer replied in verse, regretting his lack of skill, because otherwise, he said, he would write "Nummer / Einmillionfünfhunderttausendeins."[39]) Bab probably overestimated, but even so his claim to have received, "als relativ harmloser Herausgeber einer Anthologie von Kriegsgedichten," an average of forty submissions a day indicates that a very large amount of poetry was being written.[40]

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[36] Poems Written during the Great War, 1914-1918 and The Paths of Glory (London: George Allen and Unwin). In the preface to the former, Lloyd identifies as the characteristic common to all his poets, "hatred of the cant and idealization and false glamour wherewith the conception of war is still so thickly overlaid. . ." (p. 5).

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[37] Deutsches Bücherverzeichnis, 6 (1915-1920), 1855.

[38] Das literarische Echo, 1. Oktober 1914, p. 5

However, the very magnitude of this output poses two major problems--the first, of compelling some discrimination upon the researcher, since clearly only a portion of the poetry could be read, and the second, of demanding some means of classification. For the matter of deciding what to read, a selection procedure was established, in an attempt to reach a compromise between such pragmatic considerations as limitation of time and availability of texts on the one hand, and the desire, on the other, to obtain a balanced picture of the sort of poetry which was written. First, the writing of those poets was studied who were considered to be important (as war poets) by either contemporary or later critics and by anthologists. Secondly, from available bibliographies or catalogues a selection was made of titles which either suggested a decidedly typical outlook on the part of the writer or offered the possibility of revealing an unusual reaction to the war. For instance, the title Les

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[39] "1 500 000," Julius Bab, ed., 1914: Der deutsche Krieg im deutschen Gedicht, VII (Berlin: Morawe und Scheffelt, 1915), 46.

[40] Das literarische Echo, 15. Dezember 1914, p. 342.

Lauriers sur les tombes leads one to expect a response in the traditional "heroic" manner,[41] while Kampfreime eines Friedfertigen aus dem Kriegsjahr 1914 (in which year the majority of poets were not remotely "friedfertig") suggests an author whose view of the war is at least atypical.[42] Since the majority of soldier poets were officers, a special effort was made to study poems by men of the "other ranks," and poetry by women was also sought out particularly--a task much facilitated, for the English poetry at least, by the publication of Reilly's anthology.

To find an appropriate means of classifying this enormous quantity of poetry into manageable order was a major concern. An obvious approach, in view of the thematic "common denominator" which determined whether or not a poem was elegible for inclusion in the study, was to group them according to motif. Clusters of poems with a common motif are easily identified--those on the subject of destruction, for instance, of bombardment, of death, home, nature, God, other times and other places, mourning for a son or for "doomed youth," fear, the joy of action or of having "come through," comradeship, lice, or any of several dozen other topics. However, unless one chooses a specific motif and studies in some depth its use by various poets, or looks for national and international patterns in its distribution--one could, for example, analyse the treatment of nature, relating it to the traditions of nature poetry in the different languages--a motif-based study can easily degenerate into a mere catalogue, especially if the recurrence of motifs is not echoed by other consistencies within or amongst groups.

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[41] Pierre d'Arcangues (Paris: Pierre Lafitte, 1916).

[42] Pastor H. A. F. Tech (Wůsterhause, Kreis Neustettin: Selbstverlag des Verfassers, 1915).

The approach taken by most critics of the war poetry is to distinguish according to the poet's attitude towards the war--that is to say, whether he condones it or condemns it. As far as the English poetry is concerned, recent criticism centres on a very small number of mostly anti-war writers, whose lives and work had much in common--they were combatants (and, with the notable exception of Isaac Rosenberg, junior officers), and their poetry was based on a realistic picture of the war's effect, in contrast with the idealistic representation of the "pro-war" writers. However, the categories implied here do not hold good on a larger scale. For instance, the implication that combatant poets, once they were aware of the unpleasantness of war, were opposed to it, is invalid, since many continued to uphold their country's cause, in poetry as well as in practice, in spite of the horrors around them. Conversely, a considerable amount of protest writing came from the pens of civilians. Similarly, by no means all anti-war writing uses realism as its tool, and not all poetry which represents the war realistically is anti-war in the propagandist sense of Owen and Sassoon.

A potentially more useful classification scheme--a three-fold grouping--is indicated in D. S. R. Welland's Wilfred Owen: A Critical Study. Welland identifies in the English war poetry three stages, with historical progression "from the rhetorical welcoming of the war through passive resignation to an ardent rejection of it," and he calls the stages "'bardic'," "personal" and "protest."[43] Such a marked temporal progression as Welland observes in the English writing is less valid on a European scale, because protest poetry in French and German was less predominantly a phenomenon of the latter part of the war. For example, Franz Werfel's anti-war poems, "Krieg" and "Die Wortemacher des Krieges" were written in August 1914, and Marcel Martinet's appeal to the workers of Europe, "Tu vas te battre," is dated "jeudi 30 juillet 1914."[44] (It should also be noted that some of the English anti-war poems which appear in Lloyd's first anthology were written as early as November 1914.) Because Welland, in using the terms "bardic" and "rhetorical welcoming," encompasses not only the poet's attitude to the war but also his stylistic approach, the distinction between the first and last categories does not hold up so well in the other languages as it may appear to in English. A striking characteristic of the works of Werfel and Martinet and their colleagues is its rhetorical and "bardic" tone, even though they write poems of protest.

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[43] Wilfred Owen, 2nd ed. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1978), p. 29.

[44] Einander (München: Kurt Wolff, 1917), pp. 47-49, p. 50; Les Temps maudits, p. 55.

In fact, Welland falls into a trap of his own making when he implies that Margaret Sackville's The Pageant of War, a copy of which was in Owen's personal library, is to be identified with the "'bardic' flood" which welcomed the war.[45] Most of the poems in Sackville's collection, including the title poem, where the hideous glutted face of War has to wear a mask,

> . . . lest seeing
> That obscene countenance too near,
> The heart of every human being
> Should shrink in loathing and in fear
> And turn upon this thing and slay it there,

show that, far from welcoming the war, she is as fiercely opposed to it as Owen himself, despite her rhetorical approach.[46]

However, Welland's suggestion that one must consider three rather than two kinds of response to the war is helpful, and the recognition of similarities between his first and third categories leads on to the possibility of making a distinction of a different kind, based less on the poet's attitude than on his apparent purpose in writing. Poets who welcome the war, or at least who voice support for their country's cause in it, do so in a deliberately public manner, as if presenting an argument in favour of involvement, with the intention of impinging upon the attitude of their readers. Similarly, those who "ardently reject" the war are not, for the most part, simply expressing a personal opinion, but are trying to persuade others to share it, for their work, too, is designed as propaganda. In contrast, for poets whose attitude towards the war may be characterised roughly as "passive resignation," the conveying of a social message is merely incidental; their concern is not so much with their readers, and with a cause, as with their poetry and its function in relation to their own lives. The latter may be considered as "personal" poets; the two former groups, despite their totally opposing views of the war, share a strong common characteristic in that their writing is designedly "social" or "public." The poems therefore may be divided according to the author's apparent purpose as "public" or "personal," and in view of the intention of concentrating the thesis on propagandist poetry, this particular binary division, which allows all such poetry to be grouped together, seems highly satisfactory as a means of classification.

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[45] Welland, p. 18.

[46] The Pageant of War (London: Simpkin Marshall, [1916]), p. 12.

Discussion about purpose or "design" in literature demands some caution, since all poetry shares to a greater or lesser degree the same intentions. Because it uses language, it is a form of communication and has intrinsically a social purpose, "even where," as Michael Hamburger writes in connection with the "absolute" poet Gottfried Benn, "the poet is aware of no wish to communicate anything in particular, where he writes for the dead or no one."[47] This being so, it may be argued that all poems are intent on affecting the attitude of at least an implicit reader in some way, that, as Wellek and Warren concede, "there is plausibility in the contention that all artists are propagandists, or should be."[48] At the same time, whether the goal is deliberately or only accidentally propagandist, it must be recognised that the chosen means is poetry, and to the considerable extent that message and form are inseparable, all poets are concerned before everything with making a satisfactory poem. Just as a social purpose is intrinsic to the act of writing, so a concern for literary art is implicit in the use of the poetic medium.

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[47] Truth of Poetry, 19.

The ascribing of intention must also be undertaken with the awareness of a potentially wide divergence between what the author actually had in mind at the time of writing and the purpose which may be apparent to the reader. Some protest poetry leaves no doubt that its writer's goal was to publicise his opinions, and material extraneous to the text--Martinet's dedication to Les Temps maudits, for example, or Owen's draft for a preface to his projected collection of poems--merely confirms one's conclusions. It is possible that many of the writers who used their poetry for a patriotic declaration were not consciously propagandist when they wrote, and they probably considered their work only as a personal expression of their devotion to their country. However, as is frequently the case where auctorial intention is involved, that suggestion cannot be confirmed by biographical evidence, while the knowledge that much of their verse appeared in newspapers, often on the editorial page, lends support to the plausibility of ascribing a primarily social, persuasive purpose to the writing of even the lesser patriots.

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[48] Theory of Literature, 3rd ed. (New York: Harcourt, 1962), p. 35.

Since the present study relies upon drawing general precepts from the common characteristics of a large number of poems, there is justification for ignoring both biographical and contextual indications of the intention of individual writers, and for concentrating on features intrinsic to the poems, even if the ascribed purpose is somewhat removed from what external evidence may show to have been an author's personal attitude on a particular point. At the same time, it is preferable to avoid such over-generalisations concerning purpose as that of Bowra, who writes of the war-poets (by which term he seems to mean more specifically the soldier-poets), "For them the urgent, immediate task was to transform their troubles into poetry,"[49] or of Johnston, who states, "In World War I the great mission of the poet who had some prospect of publishing his verse was to communicate his sense of the reality of war to the millions at home who would not or could not appreciate the magnitude of the experiences and sacrifices of the common soldier."[50] It is interesting to note that the assumptions which the two critics make about the relationship of the poet to his poem and his audience are opposed to each other: according to Bowra, war-poets were concerned with the personal, cathartic effect of the actual writing (since, presumably, troubles converted into poetry are no longer so troublesome), while Johnston emphasises the poem's function as an act of communication, and disregards the other factors. Clearly there is no "one hypothetical poet" (to borrow T. S. Eliot's phrase), even in so relatively limited a field as Great War poetry.[51]

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[49] Poetry and Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1966), p.48.

Bowra and Michael Hamburger have both discussed Great War writing in connection with the concept of "personal" and "public" poetry. The co-existence of these two kinds in twentieth-century verse is a major theme in Hamburger's *The Truth of Poetry*, where the author argues against those critics who, like Hugo Friedrich in *Die Struktur der modernen Lyrik*, assume that modern poetry is primarily hermetic. Hamburger maintains that the influence of Baudelaire reflects that poet's own ambivalent attitude, which wavered between "two radically different, if not incompatible, conceptions of the nature and functions of poetry," the conviction, on the one hand, that "the writing of poetry is an autonomous and autotelic activity," and, on the other, a concern with "the public function of the arts as much as with their inner laws."[52] Tracing the development of the two parallel streams, Hamburger suggests that "The distinction between public and private poetry is valid if we apply it not so much to subjects or themes as to the relationship between poet and reader posited by the very structure and texture of poems on any subject whatsoever."[53] Unfortunately he fails to explain the terms "structure" and "texture," or to indicate how they are special in "public" poems, beyond suggesting that English political poetry of the 1930's was "hortatory or descriptive" rather than "exploratory," and his discussion of the work of individual poets does not lead to generalisations which might be relevant for traditional as well as modern poetry.[54]

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[50] *English Poetry of the First World War* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1964), p. 12.

[51] "Poetry and Propaganda," M. D. Zabel, ed., *Literary Opinion in America* (New York: Harper, 1937), p. 27.

A survey of features of traditional "public" poetry is the starting point for Bowra's Poetry and Politics, a study of some of the developments of political verse in the current century, but, unlike Hamburger, he considers the poet's choice of subject-matter to be the primary criterion by which one may judge a poem to be "public" or "personal." The former "deals with events which concern a large number of people, and can be grasped not as immediate, personal experience, but as matters known largely from hearsay and presented in simplified and often abstract forms."[55] It is

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[52] Truth of Poetry, p. 4; p. 6; p. 7.
[53] Ibid., p. 201.
[54] Ibid., p. 201.
[55] Poetry and Politics, p. 2.

"the antithesis of all poetry which deals with the special individual activity of the self," and he draws a contrast between "conscious majesty and a cosmic outlook" on the one hand, and "the careful presentation of private sensations and states of mind" on the other.[56] However, in spite of Bowra's predilection for the "wider vision" and "public themes," it is obvious that the relationship of poet to audience has an important place in his study; for instance, he writes that the "utterances" of public poets in earlier times were "shaped by concessions and compromises between them and their readers," and that some twentieth-century poets have attempted "to reach a wider public by simplifying their art."[57]

In the present study the term "public" is understood to denote a type of poetry which can best be described as the opposite of Gottfried Benn's "absolute" poem, "das Gedicht ohne Glauben, das Gedicht ohne Hoffnung, das Gedicht an niemanden gerichtet, ein Gedicht aus Worten, die Sie faszinierend montieren."[58] Far from being "ohne Glauben," "ohne Hoffnung," "public" poetry is linked closely with the poet's hopes and beliefs; he does not use words solely for the pleasure of setting them up, but to formulate a message, and his poem is directed quite specifically towards one or many readers. Benn sees art as "phänomenal, historisch unwirksam, praktisch folgenlos."[59] By contrast, "public" or "social" poetry ("propaganda" is another appropriate synonym) strives for the maximum in practical consequences and historical effectiveness.[60] The poet's ultimate aim, indeed, is non-literary, for he is intent upon affecting the outlook of his readers to the extent that, ideally, he may alter their course of action.

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[56] Ibid., p. 2; p. 4.

[57] Ibid., p. 4; p. 36.

[58] "Soll die Dichtung das Leben bessern?" Gottfried Benn, Gesammelte Werke (Wiesbaden: Limes, 1968), IV, 1156. Hamburger quotes this sentence in translation, (p. 18), though he attributes it to a different source.

While the "public" poet looks outward towards his society, the "personal" writer looks inwards, to his poetry and himself. Hermetic or "absolute" poetry, where the writer's attention is focused (in theory, at least,) entirely on the poem, represents one tendency in the "non-social" or "personal" poetry of the war. It is, however, nothing more than a tendency, because the ultimate effect of "l'art pour l'art" is total dissociation between the war (as subject-matter) and poetry--as evinced, for example, by Benn himself, or by Hugo Ball's withdrawal to Switzerland and the development of Dada in 1916. Isaac Rosenberg gives evidence of his own leaning towards aestheticism when he expresses his determination not to let the war "master" his poetry, and acknowledges the need to approach the subject "in a colder way, more abstract."[61] Georges Sabiron's "Haï-Kaïs,"

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[59] "Können die Dichter die Welt ändern?" Werke (1968), VII, 1671.

[60] These terms are a rephrasing of Hamburger's translation from Benn's talk, Truth of Poetry, p. 19.

[61] Letter to Laurence Binyon, Rosenberg, Collected Works, ed. Ian Parsons (London: Chatto and Windus, 1979), p. 248; letter to Mrs. Cohen, ibid, p. 237.

Trou d'obus où cinq cadavres
Unis par les pieds rayonnent,
Lugubre étoile de mer,[1]

with its air of detachment and impersonality, serves to demonstrate the aesthetic approach, showing how such basic pre-war _avant-garde_ concerns as precision of image and form might be applied to the new subject-matter.

The other strong tendency in the "personal" poetry, in contrast with "poem-oriented" writing, is that which is apparently "poet-centred." Typically spoken through a first person singular voice, it seems designed to give immediate expression to the poet's individual reaction to his situation. While the aesthetically-inclined poets usually take an innovative approach, the "self"-centred poetry is most frequently written in a traditional manner, challenging neither accepted poetic forms nor the nineteenth-century's "confessional" proclivity. "L'art pour l'art" and "self-expression" may be said to represent extremes between which all the personal poetry is ranged. At the same time, the two elements are not to be regarded as mutually exclusive, for it would be wrong to claim, primarily because one tends to make ready identification between poet and _persona_, that the apparently "self"-centred writers are not concerned with their art, as it would to insist that experimental poems are any less an expression of the poet's feelings, merely because they are obviously the work of artists extremely conscious of their medium. What Ivor Gurney says of the function of poetry in the war--

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[1] _Anthologie des écrivains morts à la guerre_ (Amiens: Malfère, 1924), I, 619.

> Out of the heart's sickness the spirit wrote
> For delight, or to escape hunger, or of war's worst
>   anger,
> When the guns died to silence, and men would gather
>   sense
> Somehow together, and find this was life indeed[2]--

is probably just as applicable for Stramm's "Frostfeuer" and Rosenberg's "Dead Man's Dump" as for the poems of Arnold Ulitz or Frederick Harvey, or, since civilians, too, suffered "heart's sickness," Vera Brittain. The distinction between poets who use the war to help them create poetry, and those for whom poetry is a means of coming to terms with their experience of the war, is impossible to make.

Welland's "passive resignation" hardly seems the right phrase to describe the attitude of people determined to "gather sense / Somehow together"--to re-establish the value of human existence in the face of mechanised destruction--by converting their experience into poetry. It is appropriate only in its implication that the "personal" poets were taking no actively propagandist role. Many of them did indeed merely accept the war as necessary, neither condemning it explicitly nor finding much virtue in it--Edward Thomas, for example, for whom war was a fact of existence comparable to the migration of birds, or Léon Chancerel, the author of one of the few "gems" amongst the French war poetry, La Chanson de sept jours. A significant number of poets took a positive attitude, perhaps, as Apollinaire sometimes did, celebrating a new facet of modern life, but more commonly welcoming the opportunity for a commitment to heroism or the far-from-modern concept of honour--an attitude exemplified in Julian Grenfell's well-known "Into Battle"--

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[2] Quoted in Michael Hurd, The Ordeal of Ivor Gurney (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978), p. 191.

> And dead is he who will not fight,
> And who dies fighting, hath increase.[3]

On the other hand, many "personal" poets questioned the value of the war, and some actually condemned its futility and horror--Trakl, Stramm and Rosenberg, to name only a few of the more famous. What distinguishes them all as "personal" poets is less their attitude towards the war than the absence in their work of features which might suggest that its primary goal was propagandist. The value in "personal" poetry lay in its service to the poet; once written, it had fulfilled its initial purpose, whether published or not. It is probable that the "public" poets, too, found considerable satisfaction and consolation in the act of writing, but that aspect is subsidiary to the communicative role of their work, to the goal of making it "historically effective" by persuading others to share their opinions and beliefs.

Of the relatively few writers whose war-poetry is still considered important, several belong to the "personal" category--Apollinaire, for instance, Edward Thomas, Isaac

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[3] "Into Battle," Soldier Poets, p. 27.

Rosenberg, possibly August Stramm and Wilhelm Klemm. To concentrate on the "public" poetry is, perhaps, to give these poets less of a hearing than they deserve, although, because the study deals in poems rather than in poets, some examples of their work come under discussion. On the other hand, there is no doubt that critical treatment of the "public" poetry of the war has been inadequate. Little attempt has been made to understand the much-maligned patriotic verse, despite its obviously overwhelming importance to contemporary writers and readers--after all, in terms of size it is by far the most important literary phenomenon of its decade. Although the better-known protest poets have received more attention (in England, at least), the propagandist aspect of their writing tends to be regarded as something reprehensible, to be minimised as far as possible, instead of the very centre of their work. Less-than-famous English protest writers, especially those who do not fit into the approved pattern of being male, combatants and "realists," have been totally ignored, and their counterparts in the other languages have fared no better. It is, therefore, appropriate that the study should concentrate on these neglected areas, even at the risk of omitting some of the few war-poets whose names are familiar to most readers.

II. The Literary Background

Charles Sorley, whose name is now often linked with those of the major English war poets, was a student in Germany in 1914. In expressing approval of what he saw as the characteristic openness and self-confidence of the Germans he met, in contrast with the usual British diffidence, he observed, "They all write poetry, and recite it with gusto to any three hours' aquaintance. We all write poetry too, in England, but we write it on the bedroom washstand and lock the bedroom door and disclaim it vehemently in public."[1] Sorley's comment supplies at least a partial answer to one of the most intriguing questions which the war poetry provokes, namely, why such a large number of people chose verse as the medium to express their reaction to the war. Although one must allow for hyperbole, and recognise that Sorley's "all" probably refers to the young and well-educated, his words imply that, just before the outbreak of war, the writing of poetry was already a popular occupation amongst the sort of people who were to be responsible for a considerable amount of that which was written during the war years. In studying the details of literary activity in the period from about 1910 onwards, one gains the impression that poetry in some way "came to life" during that time, at least in Germany, England and America. (In France a comparably active period had occurred about two decades earlier, so the pre-war revival appears, retrospectively at least, to have been somewhat less marked, although it was sufficiently strong to generate interest on the other side of the Channel.)

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[1] The Letters of Charles Sorley, with a Chapter of Biography (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1919), p. 183

Of the established English writers, Yeats was recognised by the more intellectual critics as the major living poet, and Hardy's contribution to poetry was acknowledged. Robert Bridges was very highly regarded, being appointed Laureate in 1913 on the death of the "Imperialist" Alfred Austin, and John Masefield's reputation was well established. In terms of popularity, the Imperialists were well in the forefront, as a 1913 Journal of Education survey, described by C. K. Stead in The New Poetic, shows: "Kipling received twice as many votes as his nearest rival, William Watson, with Bridges third and Alfred Noyes fourth."[2] There is no mention here of Sir Henry Newbolt, possibly because, as Stead suggests, "His audience was probably a stratum above Kipling's--the upper middle class--and consequently smaller."[3] In addition to these older writers, there was a "fermentation" of young poets, receiving considerable encouragement from Edward Marsh, from Harold Monro, and from Ezra Pound. There has been a tendency to divide the younger

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[2] The New Poetic (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 63.
[3] Ibid., p. 77.

English poets of the pre-war years into two groups, the one experimental and "modern," the other more traditional, and designated generally as "Imagist" and "Georgian." However, by their contemporaries they were considered alike as innovators, or even, in Stead's term, as "dangerous literary revolutionaries,"[4] and only gradually did they come to be seen as belonging to rival poetic camps. The first Anthology of Georgian Poetry, edited by Marsh, published by Monro, and promoted with business-like acumen by Marsh and Rupert Brooke, appeared in time for Christmas, 1912, and sold 15000 copies.[5] It was issued, as Marsh's editorial preface stated, "in the belief that English poetry is now once again putting on a new strength and beauty." The Times Literary Supplement critic added, "We share the belief, we cheer the poets, and we congratulate ourselves on the good time coming,"[6] and D. H. Lawrence described the collection as "like a big breath taken when we are waking up after a night of oppressive dreams," the "years of demolition" brought about by "the nihilists, the intellectual, hopeless people," such as Ibsen, Hardy, Flaubert and Nietzsche.[7]

A second major event for poetry in England was the opening in January 1913 of Harold Monro's Poetry Bookshop, where, as Edward Thomas noted, "you can see any and every volume of modern poetry,"[8] With its casual and "domestic" atmosphere it served a meeting place for people interested in the arts, and provided inexpensive accommodation for indigent poets, and, later, for those on leave from the Front.[9] Monro played another very important role, as a publisher of both Georgian and Imagist verse, and a third as an editor of poetry journals. For the year 1912 he edited the Poetry Society's publication, Poetry Review, but because he "absolutely refused compromise to advertisers, supporters, famous people, or friends,"[10] he parted company with the Society at the end of the year and started Poetry and Drama, which ran for two years. Monro was strongly instrumental in introducing English poets and readers to current trends in poetry on the continent. The August 1912 issue of Poetry Review, an issue "which everybody had to get," according to Pound,[11] consisted of a 60-page survey, "Contemporary French Poetry," by F. S. Flint. A "French Chronicle" by the same critic appeared in each number of Poetry and Drama, and a similar "German Chronicle," written by T. E. Hulme, was initiated in June, 1914, but the promised "next chronicle" failed to appear because of the outbreak of war. The September 1913 issue was devoted largely to Futurism.

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[4] Ibid., p. 58.

[5] Robert H. Ross, The Georgian Revolt (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1965), p. 36-7.

[6] "Georgian Poetry," rev. of the first Georgian Poetry anthology, Times Literary Supplement, February 27, 1913, p. 82.

[7] "The Georgian Renaissance," in Rhythm, March 1913, quoted by Timothy Rogers in Georgian Poetry 1911-1922 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 102.

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[8] Rogers, p. 66.

[9] Joy Grant, Harold Monro and the Poetry Bookshop (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), pp. 64-66.

[10] Poetry and Drama, 1 (March 1913), 10.

[11] The Letters of Ezra Pound, ed. D. D. Paige (New York: Harcourt, 1950), p. 74.

The beginning of Imagism predates the first Georgian anthology by at least two years. The Imagists--or, as they preferred, "Imagistes"--were described in the second issue of the American magazine Poetry as

> "a group of ardent Hellenists who are pursuing interesting experiments in vers libre : trying to attain in English certain subtleties of cadence of the kind which Mallarmé and his followers have studied in French."[12]

The March 1913 issue of the same journal printed Pound's Imagist "manifesto," which also appeared later in that year in his collected Literary Essays. The anthology Des Imagistes was originally published in a newly instituted American magazine The Glebe, forerunner of Others, in 1914, as a result of Pound's efforts.[13] In the same year Pound became involved with a yet more radical venture, the magazine Blast, the organ of "Vorticism," in which his co-editors were the painter and writer Wyndham Lewis and the sculptor Gaudier-Brzeska. Such an intermingling of verbal and visual arts was characteristic of avant garde groups in many countries in the same period.

In America, as in England, a new interest in poetry was evident in the immediately pre-war years--and, indeed, throughout the war, in which America's involvment was shorter and less total. While American poetry is relatively unimportant for the present study, a quotation from A

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[12] Poetry, 1 (1912), 65.

[13] Alfred Kreymborg, Troubadour (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1925), pp. 204-05.

History of American Poetry by Alfred Kreymborg, himself a poet and for a time editor of the magazine Others, captures something of the mood of exuberance of which one becomes aware in reading letters, memoirs and journals of the period, not only in the United States but also in the other countries under consideration. It also indicates how the revival produced a "snowball" effect, in that new ventures stimulated interest in poetry in general:

> Personally, I like to set the dawn of the renascence around 1912, without losing sight of the men and women who emerged just before. This was the year a number of experimental ventures opened their covers to poets who could not wedge their way into the old, commercial magazines. With the advent of The Lyric Year and The New Republic in New York, of Poetry and The Little Review in Chicago, of The Poetry Journal in Boston, supported by the anthological activities of William Stanley Braithwaite, Jessie B. Rittenhouse and others, and by the Poetry Society of America and its tributaries, the young unknowns were greeted by a growing audience. The Poetry Magazine, led by Harriet Monroe, adopted Whitman's maxim: "To have great poets you must have great audiences." . . . The next few years brought further ventures into the field: The Seven Arts, Contemporary Verse, The Freeman and Others. And among the sudden host of young publishers, Kennerly, Knopf, the Bonis, Liveright, Harcourt, Seltzer and others were important links in encouraging the new movement, and were joined by such older firms as Macmillan's, Harper's, Houghton Mifflin. The daily papers developed larger departments of literary criticism: poets were assured of a more competent, if not perfect, consideration of their work.[14]

Of Harriet Monroe's Poetry, Willard Thorpe writes that the pages "crackle with controversy," in which, amongst other matters, "Pound takes command in the battle for the rights of the Imagistes," and with the result that "Echoes of the battles rolled into the newspaper offices of the country, and it was not long before issues fought out on the pages of Poetry were the subject of newspaper editorials and of indignant letters from conservative readers. Poetry was news."[15]

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[14] Kreymborg, A History of American Poetry (New York: Tudor Publishing Co., 1934), p. 294.

In Germany at the same time, while poetry may not have been "news" as far as the public at large was concerned, it was certainly in a state of ferment comparable to that in Britain and the United States. However, even before this period of increased activity, German poetry had progressed much further on the route to "modernism," with the writings of George and his circle, of Rilke, of Morgenstern, and of Arno Holz. The activity of the years 1910 to 1914, unlike that in England or the slightly later movement in America, was less a quest for a new form of poetic expression per se than a manifestation of a general social malaise, a dissatisfaction with contemporary bourgeois society, for which the most appropriate medium happened to be, as far as these writers were concerned, the lyric form. Their protest against the materialism, complacency and insensitivity of Wilhelminian society, and against its "paternalism, regimentation, and demand of deference to authority"[16] (but not, it should be noted, against its political or economic structure), developed spontaneously and almost simultaneously in several German-speaking cities--Berlin, Munich, Leipzig, Dresden, Vienna, Prague--all of which, as Roy Pascal points out, were old centres of culture and administration rather than new centres of industry.[17]

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[15] "The New Poetry," in Literary History of the United States: History (New York: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 1173-74.

[16] Roy F. Allen, The Literary Circles of German Expressionism (Gőppingen: Alfred Kummerle, 1974), p. 42-43.

The circles of writers who were to become known as Expressionists were originally individuals meeting casually, usually in such a locale as the Café des Westens in Berlin or the Café Stephanie in Munich. Small magazines were their most important vehicle for publication initially: _Der Sturm_ was started in Berlin in 1910, followed by _Die Aktion_ in 1911, _Die weissen Blätter_ in Leipzig in 1913, _Revolution_ in Munich in the same year, _Der Ruf_ in Vienna in 1912, and so on. As in Britain and America, accessibility to publication both resulted from and contributed to the sudden growth in the popularity of poetry as a medium of expression--for example, the firms of Kurt Wolff in Leipzig and A. R. Meyer in Berlin, and the publishing-houses associated with _Der Sturm_ and _Die Aktion_, directed respectively by Herwarth Walden and Franz Pfemfert, all helped to ensure that the new poetry made its way to public attention. Another group of poets, of a character rather different from the Expressionist circles, had established its base in the industrialised area of Westphalia. "Der Bund der Werkleute auf Haus Nyland," of which the founding members were Josef Winckler, Jakob Kneip and Wilhelm Vershofen, was dedicated to bringing an appreciation for modern technology into the framework of the cultural inheritance, and one of its methods was to encourage the writing and publication of work by poets from the working class. By 1914 the group included two writers who were to become well-known as war-poets, Heinrich Lersch and Gerrit Engelke. It is interesting to note that one looks almost entirely in vain for a comparable interest in working-class poetry in the English or American poetic "renascence," though there is some evidence of "social realism" (as J. H. Johnston calls it[18]) in the writing of a few poets, such as John Masefield.

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[17] _From Naturalism to Expressionism_ (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), p. 125.

In comparing the pre-war situation for poetry in France with that in Germany or Britain, one misses the sense of vitality and discovery which characterises the period in the other countries, the exuberance which was making poetry "news." The most probable explanation for the difference lies in the fact that the action of freeing French poetry from "the tyranny of the ancient metrical system"[19] and of revealing the possibilities inherent in the liberated verse-forms had been carried out a generation earlier, by the Symbolist poets. A second revolution, in which poetry (or poets) again became news, was to occur in the nineteen twenties. That the war coincided with this lull may help to account for the relatively small amount of poetry in French, compared with the English and German, although no doubt the fact that many French magazines withheld publication for at least several months at the beginning of the conflict had an effect, too.

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[18] English Poetry of the First World War, p. 55.

[19] F. S. Flint, "Contemporary French Poetry," Poetry Review, 1 (1912), 361.

Although a retrospective view may suggest otherwise, F. S. Flint's Poetry Review report of 1912 indicates that he considered contemporary French poetry to be alive and well. Being primarily interested in "les jeunes," Flint omitted older poets like Verhaeren, Henri de Regnier and Paul Fort (all of whom were to produce at least one volume of war poetry) and concentrated on some twenty younger writers, with "hardly a common trait among them," each being "determined to sing only to the dictation of the daemon within him."[20] Such resistance to grouping may be another partial explanation for the comparative lack of "exuberance" in the field of poetry in France in the prewar years. One gains the impression--for instance, from P. Mansell Jones' account of conversations with various poets in 1913--that most of them were acquainted with each other, but that they preferred to stress their distinctiveness rather than their similarities, an attitude which would naturally preclude any sense of a large-scale "movement."[21] Although their main vehicles for publication, as in Germany and Britain, were literary magazines, most of these had been in existence for several years by the time of which Flint was writing. For example, Mercure de France dated back to 1890, Vers et Prose to 1905, La Phalange to 1906 and La Nouvelle Revue Française to 1909. A possible exception to the generalisation concerning the lack of a "movement" is the group originally associated with the Abbaye de Créteil, and usually designated as "unanimiste." The most prominent members were Jules Romains, Georges Chennevière, Georges Duhamel, René Arcos and Charles Vildrac, all of whom later wrote anti-war poetry. An interesting aspect of Flint's report is the fact that he made no more than passing reference to the four poets who, in retrospect, are usually seen as the most important of the period, Valéry, Claudel, Apollinaire and Péguy.

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[20] Ibid., 362.

[21] The Background of Modern French Poetry (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1951).

The revival in poetry just before the war helps to explain why most of the writers whose war poetry is still of interest may have chosen that particular mode. Their writing was a continuation of their pre-war concern with literary expression, and their subject, to a large extent, continued to be how the individual relates to his world. It is difficult to imagine that nascent poets like Robert Graves, Charles Sorley, Kurd Adler or Wilhelm Klemm would not have continued to write poetry when faced with the totally new experience of the war, an experience which Apollinaire described as a rebirth, and of which Erwin Piscator observed, "Meine Zeitrechnung beginnt am 4. August 1914."[22] For combatants, poetry offered the additional advantage of being the most convenient form of literary expression, in purely pragmatic terms, since it demanded (and often received) no more than a scrap of paper, a pencil, and a few minutes of time, for the writing down of lines which had possibly already been composed mentally. (Luc Durtain described his "Complète du poète en campagne" as "un bien pâle crayon" and "un mince cahier couleur cendre, / Déjà plein de macules et tout recroquevillé."[23]) However, the writing of Georgians and Expressionists and their "fellow-travellers," and even the work of all combatants, forms probably less than half of the total output of poetry during the war, so it is obvious that other factors were also influential in causing people to turn to the writing of verse.

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[22] Apollinaire, "La Petite Auto," Calligrammes, (Paris: Gallimard, 1925), p. 64; Piscator, Das politische Theater (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1963), p. 25.

It is important to recall that throughout history war has often inspired poetry, whether retrospectively, from the point of view of a story-teller interested in producing an exciting and moving tale, or in the form of a comment on a current war situation. (The one is sometimes used for the other: Southey's "The Battle of Blenheim," published in 1800, may be read as a comment on the Napoleonic Wars as well as on the War of the Spanish Succession.[24]) Traditional war literature, such as the originally oral "heroic" epics, takes a retrospective view. These long verse narratives describe events from legendary or historical wars, and subscribe usually to the view that death on the field of battle brings its own rewards, through long-lasting fame and admittance to a special kind of after-life. Fighting may be depicted as a matter more of choice than of necessity, brought on by the desire of the individual or his leader to achieve fame or to avoid the dishonour of appearing to be afraid. Loyalty to friends, to one's leader, and sometimes to a cause, are stressed, but the notion of loyalty to a country plays relatively little part. The Middle Ages, producing the first major works of written literature in the three languages under discussion, added the concepts of knighthood to the older warrior ethic, in an attempt both to Christianise it and to provide a "courtly" polish. Patriotism gradually took on a more important role in literary warfare--the king in the Middle English epic Richard Coeur de Lion was aggressively English, and Shakespeare's Henry the Fifth, the epitome of kingliness, was able to merge quite convincingly his love for his country into his personal quest for honour and fame (and power). Henry's rousing speeches have been reprinted in many anthologies, as if they were patriotic poems in their own right, rather than extracts from a drama.

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[23] Les Poètes contre la guerre (Genève: Le Sablier, 1920), p. 73.

[24] See Betty T. Bennett, British War Poetry in the Age of Romanticism, 1793-1815 (New York: Garland, 1976), p. 5, p. 245.

Heroic and chivalric epics do not completely ignore the unpleasant realities of battle, but in general warfare is represented as worthwhile, because it allows scope for the heroic virtues. it is possible that, as J. H. Johnston argues in English Poetry of the First World War, such a positive attitude is evidence of a balanced perspective on the part of the authors.[25] At the same time, one must allow for the practical consideration that a teller of exciting war stories has a vested interest in presenting his subject in such a light that his audience is not repelled by it. In either case, the major epics serve as an invaluable source of incidents demonstrating exemplary conduct, and of figures, the mere mention of whose name provides a point of reference. Because the epics (or the shorter, related form, heroic ballads) which have survived tend to deal with events from what may be regarded as a high point in the history or pre-history of a culture, they are often used in a current war situation as a means of generating patriotic fervour. A relevant and timely comment is to be found in the third volume of the American magazine Poetry, where the editor summarises a recent talk, of which the theme was "Poetry as an inspiration of the Balkan war." The speaker showed that "the Servian [sic] national songs have kept alive the heroic spirit of the people during more than four centuries of Turkish oppression."[26]

In addition to the longer and usually older folk-poetry forms, the epic and the heroic ballad, there are many folk-songs on the subject of war. Perhaps because this is the poetry of the ordinary people, who often have to suffer war and its consequences without the attendant glory or any material advantage, and equally because the songs are constantly amended according to the criticism of singers and audience, one finds not uncommonly a cynical and down-to-earth revision of the heroic attitude. At the same time, soldiers' songs may also be a device for encouragement within the group, and marching songs in particular commonly show evidence of a properly "martial" tone. Unlike many epics and ancient ballads, narrative folksong telling of more recent battles often reveals a deliberately patriotic attitude, if only through an opening formula of the "Come all you bold Canadians" type. Many widely-known songs which express loyalty to one's country are not genuine folk-songs, but relatively recent products of a specific song-writer's pen. National anthems may be used in folksong situations, but because they have only a single "authorised" version, they are deprived of the valuable editing effect which folksinging normally offers.

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[25] Johnston, p. 9 ff.

[26] "The Servian Epic," Poetry, 3 (1913-14), 195.

While the Great War was uncharacteristic of many military conflicts in the degree to which those involved were not professional soldiers, but took a civilian outlook to the Front, it is by no means unique in evoking a considerable amount of contemporary poetry. Betty T. Bennett found over three thousand English poems published between 1793 and 1815 about the Napoleonic Wars, and M. van Wyk Smith lists some two hundred and thirty volumes in the "Published Poetry" section of the bibliography to his account of the poetry of the Boer War, Drummer Hodge.[27] These two studies show that, when poetry is concerned with a current rather than a historical or legendary war, the anti-war attitude is be no means absent, whether in the form of political comment or as a realistic view of events.

The late nineteenth century saw a marked increase in nationalism in Europe, accompanied by imperialistic expansion abroad, and a corresponding growth in the amount of patriotic poetry, either newly-written or revived, to be published. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 and the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 to 1901 provided poets in the countries involved with a worthy excuse for patriotism. The phrase "jingoism," which is often applied to the patriotic attitude expressed in British poetry and popular song of this period, originated several years before the Boer War, in a music-hall song beginning "We don't want to fight, but by jingo if we do...," referring to the Russo-Turkish war of 1877. The best-known of the English "empire" writers is Kipling, though of course there is much more to Kipling than his "Imperialist" side. W. E. Henley, Alfred Austin, and William Watson all celebrated the cause of England and Empire in a similar manner, typified in Watson's

> England my mother,
> Wardress of waters,
> Builder of people,
> Maker of men,

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[27] Bennett, p. 3; Drummer Hodge: The Poetry of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), pp. 313-23.

while Henry Newbolt managed to combine that cause very neatly with Christianity, cricket, and the "old school" spirit.[28] In Germany, after the patriotic fervour of the years around 1870, the imperialist mood of the end of the century found much of its expression in popular novels, such as those of Felix Dahn and Kurt May. However, both Dahn and Ernst Wildenbruch, primarily a dramatist, published poetry on nationalistic themes, as did the novelist Ludwig Thoma.[29] In France, where defeat in the Franco-Prussian war left a severe mark, the reviving spirit of nationalism appears to have found little outlet in poetry, probably because the mood of the day, in verse-writing, was the moonlight, roses, and death of the later stages of Symbolism.

With the coming of war in 1914, new anthologies of patriotic verse from earlier periods appeared in all three languages. There was, for instance, L'Ame de la France dans ses poètes, edited by Paul Verrier, and the "Inselbücherei" anthology Deutsche Vaterlandslieder, a collection in the form of a historical survey, beginning with Walther von der Vogelweide. Maximilian Bern supplied a particularly splendid subtitle for his anthology Deutschland, Deutschland über alles, in the words, "Ein vaterländisches Hausbuch für jung und alt zur Verherrlichung deutscher Heldenkraft und Herzensgüte, deutscher Kultur und Wesensart." England produced, amongst several other collections of heroic and patriotic poetry from earlier times, Remember Louvain: A Little Book of Liberty and War,[30] Lord God of Battles,[31] and England, my England: A War Anthology.[32] The latter rather belies its title by containing poems about battles which had no connection with England, including Thomas Campbell's account of the battle of Hohenlinden, Lord Macauley's "Horatius," and some of Walt Whitman's American Civil War poetry.

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[28] Lachrymae Musarum and Other Poems (London: Macmillan, 1892), p. 62.

[29] See Helene Adolf, ed., Im neuen Reich: 1871-1914, Politische Dichtung, 7, Deutsche Literatur...in Entwicklungsreihen (Leipzig: Reclam, 1932).

It is clear that a response in poetry to the heroic and patriotic possibilities of the new war was in an accepted literary tradition. However, Great War poetry of this type was not merely written in vast quantities, it was also published, and, one must assume--since publication continued, and some works ran to several printings--bought and read.[33] Its widespread and enthusiastic reception by readers probably owes much to the fact that in England, France and Germany universal education was only a few decades old, public schooling having been either introduced (in Britain) or strengthened (in France and Germany) by acts of parliament in the 1870's. Not only was there an expanded reading public by the early years of the century, but it formed an audience predisposed towards "high-minded" poetry.

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[30] Ed. E. L. V. (London: Methuen, 1917).

[31] Ed. A. E. Manning Foster (London: Cope and Fenwick, 1914).

[32] Ed. George Goodchild (London: Jarrold, 1914).

[33] For instance, Eugen Müller's anthology 1914: Das Kriegsliederbuch, published by Xenien on September 2, 1914, ran to a second printing before the end of that month.

With only a limited background of family literacy--many of the soldiers represented the first generation in their family to have received a full elementary education, though probably their parents' generation was partially literate--the influence of school reading material must have been particularly strong, and in the nationalistic and empire-building mood of the turn of the century, heroic and patriotic literature formed an important part of it. One may turn, for instance, to Number 21 in the Nelson "Short Studies in English Literature" series, with the title *Poems of Loyalty by British and Canadian Authors*, of which the editor's intent was to select poems "inspired by that spirit or influence which prepares for and conduces to true patriotism in the youth of any great nation or people."[34] A comparable approach to the same problem was used in another "great nation," Germany, where, for example, the fifth in a series of year-by-year courses of instruction to be used by teachers in "Volkschulen" suggested a number of patriotic poems to be studied, noting that it was unnecessary to print complete texts, "da diesselben in den meisten Lesebüchern enthalten sind."[35] It is significant that the plebescite which showed Kipling and William Watson to be the most popular English poets should have been conducted by the *Journal of Education*. The schoolroom influence is also reflected in the type of poetry written by those soldier-poets who may be assumed (from such biographical information as is at hand) to have come from a recently-literate background; however, their contribution to the mass of published work which has survived was not large.

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[34] Wilfred Campbell, ed., (London: Nelson, n.d.), p. v. The preface is dated December 1912.

[35] L. E. Seidel, ed., *Das fünfte Schuljahr: Theoretisch-praktische Anweisung für Lehrer und Lehrerinnen...* (Langensalza: Gressler, 1902), p. 190.

The ready acceptance of poetry by publishers and readers is especially pertinent to the study of the function of "public" writing like patriotic verse, because in its present use the term "public" denotes a type of poem directed expressly towards an audience. One must recognise that like most literary forms lyric poetry, whether "public" or "personal," has a "reader within the text," an entity created along with the poem. However, with propaganda poetry this theoretical person to whom the words are communicated must have an identifiable counterpart in real life, otherwise the poem's purpose in generating "practical consequences" is defeated immediately. Michael Hamburger observes that the weakness of much of the political poetry in England in the 1930s lay in the fact that the relationship between poet and reader which the poetry posited was based on a "community" of knowledge and experience that did not exist in reality, because of differences in class and education.[38] On the other hand, the typical nineteenth-century "public" poet apparently faced no such difficulty; according to Bowra,

> The strength of this poetry comes from the poet's

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[38] Truth of Poetry, p. 201.

> conviction that he speaks for a mass of people who share his outlook and his interests. He addresses a large audience in the knowledge that many already agree with him on his main tenets, and in the hope that many others will do so when they hear what he has to say.[37]

The major part of the "public" poetry of the Great War was an expression of support for the cause of the poet's homeland, and the implicit reader to whom the poem was addressed was a fellow-countryman. The only shared circumstance needed to link this implied reader to its empirical counterpart was the fact of being compatriots, so the patriotic writer had, potentially, a very wide audience.

It is obvious that patriotic poets encountered little difficulty in publishing their work. In the first instance daily newspapers and general-interest magazines brought their poetry to its intended audience; Bab observed in September 1914 that "Etwa hundert neue und verschiedene Gedichte täglich sind im August in Deutschland zum Druck gelangt,"[38] and the situation appears to have been little different in England. In its original format, therefore, the poetry was exposed to a very large number of readers, and publication in this form continued, though later on a diminished scale, throughout the war. Public oral readings, such as those at the Théâtre National in Paris, also helped to ensure that patriotic verse reached as large an audience as possible. In popular terms the role of literary magazines was less important than that of general-interest periodicals, since they were not so widely read and, in any case, their editors seem to have turned away after a month or two from fervent expressions of patriotism to poetry which was more concerned with a private than a public response.

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[37] Poetry and Politics, p. 4.

[38] "Die Kriegslyrik von heute," Das literarische Echo, 1. Oktober 1914, p. 5.

At the beginning of the war publication in book form, especially of anthologies, followed very quickly upon the initial appearence of poems in the daily and weekly press. Songs and Sonnets for England in War Time claimed to be a "first" in English; in his "Publisher's Note" John Lane observed that his collection was "unique" in that no previous anthology of war poetry had been formed "during the conflict itself."[39] It is interesting to note that Lane already used the expression "great war" in his text and in the subtitle of his collection, which was, presumably, published soon after the date of the latest poem which he included, September 9, 1914. The poems had already appeared in a variety of newspapers. Julius Bab, for the first in his series of anthologies, similarly took up poems which had been printed elsewhere, although he was soon to be overwhelmed by unpublished contributions, rather than by the suggestions for reprints for which he originally appealed.[40] These early anthologies were the start of a flood of published volumes of patriotic poetry which continued throughout the war.

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[39] Songs and Sonnets (London: John Lane, 1914), p. viii.
[40] "Nachwort," Bab, II, inside back cover.

For the "public" writers who were using their poetry to protest against the war, the publicising of their viewpoint was more difficult. Some of their work found its way into pacifist or left-wing publications like The Herald or The Nation, and into radical literary journals such as Die Aktion, but, lacking immediate general appeal and an acceptable political outlook, it did not find ready access to large-circulation newspapers and magazines, and it certainly was not taken up widely by anthologists during the war. Censorship also played its part, especially, it seems, in France. Since even such a mildly protesting poem as Maurice Pottecher's "Le Point de vue des corbeaux," in which three birds revel in talk of the corpses lying on the ground throughout Europe, was removed at the request of the censor from its original place in Les Chants de la tourmente,[41] it is hardly surprising that Martinet had to turn to Switzerland for the publication of Les Temps maudits in 1917. Nevertheless, P.-J. Jouve's Vous êtes les hommes, which Ludwig Rubiner describes as "das erste Dichtwerk gegen den Krieg, das in Europa erschien,"[42] was published in Paris in 1915 by La Nouvelle Revue Française, which was also responsible for Jules Romains' Europe the following year.

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[41] The author notes that he "ne juge pas ces scruples fondés," but concurs all the same. Les Chants de la tourmente (Paris: Ollendorff, 1916), p. 6. The poem appeared in the post-war anthology Les Poètes contre la guerre, pp. 108-9.

[42] Ludwig Rubiner, ed., Kameraden der Menschheit (Potsdam: Kiepenheuer, 1919), p. 169.

(However, Jouve's later anti-war writing was published first in Switzerland.) André Spire's Et j'ai voulu la paix, which appeared in France only after the war, was published in London by The Egoist in 1916. It is possible that French protest poetry was affected by the fact that most literary periodicals in that country suspended publication for a part of the war,[43] although the evidence of other countries suggests that such magazines would not have been a primary outlet for anti-war propaganda poets.

In Germany literary magazines continued to be appear, and at least one, Zeit-Echo, containing art as well as poetry, was started as a "Kriegs-Tagebuch der Künstler." However, it published little protest poetry, even though its third editor, Rubiner, regarded the magazine as a propaganda vehicle for his international Socialist views. The impetus given to the publishing of unconventional verse by the early Expressionist movement was by no means halted, and major literary periodicals like Der Sturm, Die weissen Blätter, and Die Aktion continued to appear throughout the war. Both Die weissen Blätter, edited by René Schickele (in Zürich from 1916), and Karl Kraus's Die Fackel (in Vienna), were distinctly anti-war, but as far as poetry was concerned, the centre of protest was definitely Franz Pfemfert's Aktion. From September 1914 it carried a regular column, "Verse vom Schlachtfeld," and in 1916 Pfemfert produced an anthology,

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[43] Most notably La Nouvelle Revue Française, which did not resume publication until 1919. Mercure de France, on the other hand, was interrupted for only eight months.

1914-1916, compiled from war-poems which the magazine had published, as the first volume of his "Aktionslyrik" series. He described the book as the "Asyl einer heute obdachlosen Idee," and later advertised it as "Eine Antikriegs-Anthologie."[44] Pfemfert's two series, "Die Aktionslyrik" and "Der rote Hahn" provided "Asyl" for many individual collections of protest poetry, including Ludwig Baumer's Das jüngste Gericht, (Der rote Hahn, 16) and Oskar Kanehl's Die Schande, (Die Aktionslyrik, 7). Kurt Wolff published Albert Ehrenstein's Der Mensch schreit and J. R. Becher's An Europa in 1916, and Ehrensteins's Die rote Zeit, from S. Fischer in Berlin, appeared in 1917. However, it is clear that censorship played some part in keeping the German protest poetry from its intended audience, and not only by the ruling (as a result of Pfemfert's statement of editorial intent in August 1914), that Die Aktion be available solely to subscribers.[45] For example, Richard Fischer states in the foreword to his Schrei in die Welt (1919),

> "Gegen den Krieg, für die Menschheit schrein diese Gedichte aus den Mordfeldern Rumäniens, Flanderns und Frankreichs in die Welt. Sie wollten in die Welt schrein--aber die Zensur von 1917 und 18 drosselte den Schrei."[46]

Becher's "An Deutschland," printed in Ludwig Rubiner's anthology Kameraden der Menschheit in 1919, is annotated--

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[44] 1914-1916: Eine Anthologie, Die Aktionslyrik, 1 (Berlin-Wilmersdorf: Die Aktion, 1916), p. 118.

[45] Die Aktion, 26. September 1914, p. 797.

[46] Schrei in die Welt (Dresden: Dresdner Verlag von 1917, 1919), p. 5.

"Geschrieben 1915 und von der Zensur unterdrückt."[47] Certainly a steady stream of anti-war poetry written during the conflict was forthcoming for a few years after 1918, much of it augmented by more recent poems expressing a left-wing political viewpoint--for example, Ernst Toller's Vormorgen (1924), W. G. Hartmann's Wir Menschen (1919), and Kanehl's Die Schande (1921).

When Die Aktion was threatened with the prospect of being silenced, Pfemfert resorted to publishing only literature, instead of more direct political comment.[48] (His ultimate answer to censorship was a column under the title "Ich schneide die Zeit aus," in which he merely quoted what he obviously regarded as the inane remarks of his opponents.) If poetry was considered "safe" in Germany, at least in the early part of the war, the same was probably true in Britain.[49] Certainly there is no ready evidence to suggest that official censorship had a role in preventing the publication of the English anti-war poetry. For instance, several of the poems in Bertram Lloyd's 1918 anti-war anthology had already appeared in The Nation or The Herald, and there was apparently no interference with the publication of Siegfried Sassoon's Counter-Attack in 1917. It seems most probable that, since most of the poets belonged to the "acceptable" classes, displayed no obviously radical and therefore suspect political leanings, and in many cases, as members of the armed service, were to be looked upon as "brave and gallant gentlemen,"[50] their protest was not recognised as such by a large number of their readers. As evidence, one may point to the misreading by Galloway Kyle, editor of Poetry Review, of some of the poems in the anthology Soldier Poets: Songs of the Fighting Men, which he presumably helped to compile. He wrote in the preface,

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[47] Rubiner, p. 58.

[48] He announced, " Die Aktion wird in den nächsten Wochen nur Literatur und Kunst enthalten. Soweit es von meinem Kraft abhängt, von meinem Wollen, wird unsere Zeitschrift ohne Unterbrechung weitererscheinen." Aktion, 15. August 1914, p. 693.

[49] Even later, Wandrey suggests, censorship was not particularly important with regard to poetry, since "Die schon im Jahre 1917 stark gelockerten Zensurbestimmungen für Literatur haben die Lyrik offenbar nicht wesentlich verändert." Das Motiv des Krieges, p. 245.

> The soldier-poets leave the maudlin and the mock-heroic, the gruesome and fearful handling of Death and his allies to the neurotic civilian who stayed behind to gloat on imagined horrors and inconveniences and to anticipate the uncomfortable demise of friends.[51]

However, a glance at the book shows that the poets themselves were equally aware of the "horrors and inconveniences," whether in describing the ruins of a village, where "in greening slime / The bloated body of a puny kitten / Floats, decayed and foul," in assessing the probable outcome of an attack as nothing more than "To tend the wounded, for the dead to weep," or in questioning the whole concept of war and patriotism:

> Why fret ourselves in order to curtail
> The short existences of other men?
> And yet, in order to achieve this end

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[50] Erskine Macdonald and Gertrude S. Ford, eds., A Crown of Amaranth (London: Erskine Macdonald, 1917), subtitle.

[51] Soldier Poets, pp. 8-9.

> We suffer untold hardships, spend our wealth,
> Endure the indescribable, and strain
> Our ev'ry sinew, muscle, energy,
> And name us patriots.[52]

In all this Kyle saw only "a unity of spirit, of exultant sincerity and unconquerable idealism." His reacton allows one to imagine the frustration which the protest poets must have felt in their struggle to overcome such total acceptance of the "official" view of war, and leads one to understand why some of them may have felt compelled to try to shock the population at large.

Although there are poems in Soldier Poets which fall into the category of "public" patriotic verse, and others which undoubtedly protest against the war, most of the poets take up the accepting attitude characteristic of "personal" poetry. English anthologies from the early part of the war were noticably given over to patriotic writing in a "public" manner, so Soldier Poets, despite the "blindness" of its presumed editor, marked a new path, in being devoted largely to the "personal" type of writing. Its sequel, More Songs of the Fighting Men (1917), reveals the trend of "personal" poetry away from war as subject-matter, for it contains relatively few war-poems as such. In Germany, Alfred Biese's anthology, Poesie des Krieges (1915), also showed a move towards "personal" poetry, and Bab soon abandoned the total commitment to patriotism of his early anthologies, although the Vaterland continued to be important throughout the series. Wartime anthologies which show the strongest leaning towards the "personal" approach are, like Galloway's, made up primarily of contributions by combatants--E. B. Osborn's The Muse in Arms (1917), Bernard et Buissonville's 1917 collection by Belgian "poètes-soldats," or those produced by the soldiers themselves, such as Battalion Ballads (from the 17th Highland Light Infantry) or Cinquante Quatre (from the 54th Squadron, Air Flying Corps). A notable exception--a collection with a number of "personal" poems from civilians--is A. E. Macklin's anthology of poems by women, The Lyceum Book of War Verse (1918).

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[52] H.Smalley Sarson, "The Village, 1915, p. 85; Sydney Oswald, "The Attack," p. 70; E.J.L.Garstin, "Lines written between 1 and 2.30 a.m. in a German Dug-out," p. 26.

In theory, publication was less vital to the fulfilment of the "personal" author's artistic intention than in the case of "public" poetry, his audience being primarily the "implied reader" of his own creation, but it is obvious that "personal" poets were just as anxious as their "public" counterparts to appear in print. A substantial number of such poems was accepted by newspapers and general-interest magazines, though the former, in particular, seem to have preferred poetry of the "public" type (provided it was suitably patriotic). Many poets were content with the more limited fame of military magazines and "trench" publications like the Wipers Times or L'Écho des tranchées. However, the most secure refuge of "personal" poets seems to have been the literary periodical; Georgian Poetry, Zeit-Echo, Die weissen Blätter, Mercure de France and many more all appear to have found in the "personal" poetry a reflection of the editor's own attitude towards the war, or perhaps of the type of poetry for which he considered the new subject-matter best suited. In addition, publishing houses accepted very many small individual volumes, possibly financed by the author or his family, and one finds many privately-printed collections or even single poems.

In view of the existing situation which predisposed writers, readers and publishers towards poetry of one kind or another, and of the tradition of interconnection between poetry and war, it is not surprising that verse should have remained popular during the years of the conflict. Some fifteen years after the end of the war, the English critic F. R. Leavis opened the first chapter of New Bearings in English Poetry with the words "Poetry matters little to the modern world."[53] While Leavis dismissed most of the poetry from the two previous decades as "not so much bad as dead," thereby allowing the "serious" critic to disregard it,[54] and while the wartime censors seem to have set little store by it, one cannot but feel that in the countries in question, immediately before and during the war, poetry was of considerable importance to many people. In the prewar years it "mattered" both to avant garde writers searching for a new mode of literary expression, and to recently-literate readers enjoying the poetic classics of their particular language. With the onset of war, it proved to be a highly suitable vehicle for the expression and generation of patriotic sentiment, it was used by a substantial number of people as a means of voicing their protest against the seemingly unnecessary suffering, and it provided a useful instrument for those who, to find momentary escape from the horror of life around them, could "transform their troubles into poetry."[55]

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[53] New Bearings in English Poetry (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 13. First published 1932.

[54] Leavis, p. 14.

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[55] Bowra, Poetry and Politics, p. 48.

III. The Patriotic Response

Although, considered retrospecively, the purposes for which the Great War was fought may be hard to understand, there was apparently less confusion at the time. The introduction to a collection of papers from a 1976 symposium War Aims and Strategic Policy in the Great War 1914-1918 states that "Recent research . . . has largely destroyed the fallacy that most of the powers declared war in 1914 without any clear perceptions of why and to what ultimate end."[1] The considerable amount of verse written in the early months of the conflict reveals a definite sense of purpose, though it must be admitted that military chiefs, political leaders and the populace at large (including poets) probably all understood the matter in quite different ways. Viewing the war poetry *en masse*, one becomes immédiately aware of an enormous quantity of patriotic writing, for literally thousands of poems abound with the name of the country and with terms like "fatherland" and "motherland"--"O mein Vaterland, heiliges Heimatland," "Deutschland muss leben, und wenn wir sterben mússen," "Fúrs Vaterland und deutsches Blut," "La France appelle ses soldats," "O France, tant que tu voudras," "O France... / Ma mère, ma patronne et ma sainte épousée," "Happy is England now, as never yet," "England mourns for her dead across the sea," "Who dies if England live?" to quote from only a few of the more famous.[2] Recent critical attention, focusing on a few innovative poets, has tended to create an impression that Great War poetry was, typically, the work of men who were by no means convinced that their fighting was worthwhile,[3] but in fact by far the majority of poems express complete sympathy with the cause of the poet's homeland.

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[1] Barry Hunt and Adrian Preston, eds. (London: Croom Helm, 1977), p. 10.

Patriotism, the force which motivates participants in the war like those quoted above (though only three of them were eventually on active service) involves a voluntary commitment to a concept under the name of the particular country. In his study of the German Great War poetry, Ronald Peacock attempts to show how such a concept develops out of the desire to protect one's physical surroundings. When "home and native land" are threatened, he suggests, the

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[2] Gerhard Hauptmann, "O mein Vaterland!" Bab, II, 4; Heinrich Lersch, "Soldaten-Abschied," Bab, I, 6; Fritz von Unruh, "Reiterlied," Bab, I, 16; Theodore Botrel, "Hardi, les gâs," *Les Chants du bivouac* (Paris: Payot, 1915), p. 17; Paul Claudel, "Tant que vous voudrez, mon général!" *Poemes de guerre* (Paris: N. R. F., 1922), p. 13. Nicolas Beauduin, "L'Offrande héroïque," *L'Offrande héroïque* (Neuilly-Paris: La Vie des Lettres, [1916]), p. 47; John Freeman, "Happy is England Now," Edward Marsh, ed., *Georgian Poetry, 1916-1917* (London: Poetry Bookshop, 1917), p. 138; Laurence Binyon, "For the Fallen," *The Four Years* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1919), p. 42. Rudyard Kipling, "For All We Have and Are," *Songs and Sonnets*, p. 94.

[3] For example, Johnston, Silkin, Gregson and Bergonzi all employ the same format, covering the "pro-war" poetry in a few pages, but devoting entire chapters to individual "anti-war" poets.

"material heritage" assumes a "a mantle of holiness."[4] As national consciousness is awakened, people both "perceive those more subtle ties which join them to their fellows" and become more aware that "the freedom, the integrity, the independence of the nation must be preserved." Ultimately "that material and spiritual possession, the nation," is "raised to a principle." He goes on to show that "the discovery of a patriotic love" leads on to an understanding of the relationship of the individual and the state, and of the duty implicit in it. However, what Peacock overlooks is the limitedness of inborn "territorial imperative" in man, and the considerable debt which "love of the fatherland" owes to prior social conditioning;[5] having once been learnt, an appropriately patriotic response can be called forth easily by such stimuli as the mention of the name of a hero, a few bars from the tune of a particular song, or the sight of an emblem or flag, to say nothing of more obviously manipulative verbal devices like speeches and anthems. Because such a response is emotional rather than rational, it was quite unnecessary for the German people to become aware, as Peacock suggests, that the "integrity" of the nation must be preserved, or to be conscious of their position within the relationship of individual and state, before volunteering their enthusiastic support at the start of the war. The poet Rudolf Herzog described the stimulus-response situation much more accurately when he wrote

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[4] Peacock, p. 194.

[5] See Chs. 2 and 3 of Leonard W. Doob, Patriotism and Nationalism: Their Psychological Foundations (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1964) and Ina-Maria Greverus, Der territoriale Mensch (Frankfurt a. M.: Athenäum, 1972).

> Zwei Worte--Feind und Vaterland--
> Und alles ist gesprochen.[6]

Nevertheless, the factors which Peacock mentions are indeed implicit when one uses the term "fatherland" (or "homeland," "motherland, "native land")--a sense of mutual belonging _vis-à-vis_ the way of life, the culture, history, and often the system of government of one's country, as well as the actual physical terrain. The majority of poets simply take the country as concept as a _donnée_, so that the words "La France," for instance, are assumed to indicate a total culture, not merely a geographical region. Even so, the physical unit, the "material heritage," is constantly in mind, because a major issue of the war is territorial aggression, or fear of it. It is not surprising that the French and Belgian poets condemn the German intrusion within their borders, and regard it as the only necessary justification for going to war. Nicolas Beauduin, in "Collecte," states the French position with quite unusual calmness when he says,

> Nous ne désirons rien que ce qui est à nous,...
> Nous luttons simplement pour défendre nos villes,
> Nos fermes, nos enclos fleuris, nos champs de blé."[7]

Many writers deplore more specifically the destruction of ancient towns like Liège and Louvain, and of churches and cathedrals, especially Rheims. Rather more surprising, in view of the tendency of history to judge Germany as the aggressor, is the fact that defence of the fatherland is quite as important a motivating factor, in poetry, for the Germans as for the French. In Heinrich Lersch's "Soldaten-Abschied" the departing soldier, perhaps the most famous in all the German war poetry, states his purpose and that of his fellows simply as "wir gehn, das Vaterland zu schützen," while Karl Bröger represents Germany's apparent aggression as a defensive action:

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[6] "Zwei Worte," _Ritter, Tod und Teufel_ (Leipzig: Quelle und Meyer, 1915), p. 19.

[7] Beauduin, p. 56.

> Dass kein fremder Fuss betrete den heimischen Grund,
> Stirbt ein Bruder in Polen, liegt einer in Flandern wund.[8]

Bröger's attitude is easily understood in view of the frequency with which German poets refer to the sense of being surrounded by enemies, and of belonging to a country standing alone against three strong forces. (Relatively few poems mention Austria's involvement.) For example, Cäsar Flaischen in "Deutscher Weltkrieg" describes how

> Sie haben seit Jahren uns umstellt
> An allen Ecken und Kanten,
> . . .
> Hie Russ', hie Brite, hie Franzos ...
> Und alles gegen einen![9]

and phrases like "in Ost und West vom Feind umstellt" and "von Gefahr umringt" run like a chorus through the poetry. The multiple threat is emphasised when poets use a "tryptich" structure, with a separate stanza devoted to the failings and projected downfall of each of the three major enemies, the Russians, the French and the British. Bab calls this, rather disparagingly, "Aufzählungspoesie,"[10] but two examples are to be found in his first anthology, the "Mainzer Wachtstube" song "O Nikolaus, O Nikolaus" and the more famous, or at least more respectable, "Reiterlied" of Gerhardt Hauptmann.[11] However much the feeling of being threatened may have resulted from propaganda rather than from the facts of the case, the widespread recurrence in the poetry of the sense of being surrounded by enemies suggests that this apprehension of the situation had penetrated deeply into the German consciousness, to become a fact in itself, and is not to be dismissed as merely an after-the-event justification for the invasion of France and Belgium.

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[8] "Soldaten-Abschied," Bab, I, 6; "Bekenntnis," Kamerad, als wir marschiert (Jena: Diederichs, 1917), p. 3.

[9] Neue Kriegslieder (Berlin: Juncker, n.d.), pp. 72-73.

Though defence as the motive for going to war is a factor common to poets of both languages, there is a significant difference in the tone and attitude of the French and German patriotic poetry in general. The Germans, so the poetry shows, are firmly committed to the belief that the war was brought upon them by the connivance of the other European powers, and recognise that the fight against these forces requires an enormous effort if the country is to be saved. Although many poets express regret about the need for war, the tone is generally positive, with a strong sense of fighting for a cause, and the majority of poems end with something akin to a war-cry--"Auf und hinein in den heiligen Krieg!" "Deutschland muss bestehn!" "Sieg oder Tod!" "Hoch, hoch, die Fahne / Ewig hoch!" "Zum letzten Streit! Zum Sieg! Zum Sieg!" to quote a few endings from Volkmann's anthology.[12] The French writing, on the other hand, gives the impression of fighting against rather than for something, being marked by a considerable amount of invective against the attackers and by a persistent call for revenge. The dominant theme is quite definitely martyrdom, of both innocent civilian and "héros sacré." Death is either implied or mentioned in almost every poem, not merely as a possibility, (as in Lersch's "Deutschland muss leben, und wenn wir sterben müssen" or Warncke's "Sieg oder Tod"[13]), but as an accomplished fact. The following "last lines" from poems in a popular French anthology, Turpin's Les Poètes de la guerre, form a strong contrast with the German shouts of triumph: "De vous nous sommes fiers et sur vous nous pleurons / Soldats, Héros, Martyrs! sans connaître vos noms..." "O père qui, sans pleurs, sur la joue amaigrie, / As reçu le baiser sanglant de la Patrie!"

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[10] "Die Kriegslyrik von heute," Lit. Echo 15. Dezember 1914, p. 344.

[11] "O Nikolaus," Bab, I, 21; "Reiterlied," Bab, I, 17. In the original edition the song is anonymous, but in the article noted above Bab identifies the author as Wilhelm Platz.

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[12] Dietrich Eckart, "Deutschland," Volkmann, p. 50; Will Vesper, "Mahnung," p. 56; Paul Warncke, "Auf! Auf" p. 56; Richard Dehmel, "Deutschlands Fahnenlied," p. 62; Julius Hart, "Krieg," p. 67.

[13] Emphasis added.

"Pauvre soldat, ta tâche est faite!"[14] Some poets appear to find considerable satisfaction in their country's position as innocent victim, and pleasure in suffering and martyrdom is suggested in such lines as "La gloire fait la Mort plus belle que la Vie," "Le glorieux sanglot des mères héroïques," or "Oui, qu'importe après tout que ma manche soit vide, / Si de fierté mon coeur est plein."[15]

In his comparison of the German and French war-poetry, Harvey C. Grumbine summarises the differences in terms of the respective "self" of the two countries, which he equates with their "God." The German God, he says, is "positive, aggressive, constructive, masculine," while the French God is "negative in virtue, defensive in war, critical in temper, and feminine in fibre."[16] (It is perhaps difficult to appreciate, from these words, that Grumbine's stand is strongly in favour of France.) While Grumbine thus accounts for the difference in attitudes amongst poets of the two countries by assessing their religious outlook as either pagan or Christian, Ronald Peacock explains the particularity of German patriotism as a product of German philosophy, for "Kant, Fichte and Nietzsche . . . lurk in the poetry."[17] However, it is possible that the general tone of the poetry, like the war itself, was dictated by factual circumstances quite as much as by the underlying philosophy of those involved. German military strategists recognised that the only possible defence, with an enemy on either side, was through the complete and rapid destruction of one of the opposing forces. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the poetry similarly calls for a concerted effort for victory. France, on the other hand, was fully justified in seeing herself, as in 1870, the innocent victim of aggression, and, with an obvious military disadvantage, a call for ultimate rather than immediate victory was more appropriate. At the same time, the difference in tone may equally well result from differing literary usage. Overlooking almost entirely developments in poetic technique in the previous fifty years, the majority of French patriotic poets chose as their metric form the alexandrine. Such a long and carefully-balanced line dictates a type of poetry which tends to sound reflective, and which certainly does not lend itself to battle-cries. .The German patriotic poets, on the other hand, made use of whatever their lyric tradition had to offer, including a wider variability in metric pattern, and an inclination towards exhortative endings. The practice of closing the poem with an exclamation or exhortataion occurs with surprising frequency in German lyric poetry, and it is easily adapted to accommodate words like "Das Reich, das Reich, es muss bestehen!"

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[14] Victor Snell, "Les Croix," Georges Turpin, ed., Les Poètes de la guerre (Paris: Fischbacher, [1917]), I, 172. Henri de Regnier, "Le Père," I, 167; Victor Compas, "La Cueillette tragique," I, 65.

[15] Henri de Regnier, "Pour le Jour des Morts," 1914-1916, p. 28; "Commémoration," ibid, p. 30; Joseph Bayer, "La Manche vide," Turpin, II, 35.

[16] Humanity or Hate--Which? (Boston: Cornhill, 1918), p. 8.

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[17] Peacock, p. 195.

A combination of historical circumstances and recent literary tradition probably dictates the prevailing tone of the English patriotic verse, too. In justifying their enthusiasm for war the English were in a more difficult position than the French or the Germans, as their home territory was neither attacked nor directly threatened. It is apparent that the majority of English patriotic poets recognised this difficulty or, more probably, did not even consider invasion to be a possibility. Despite Kipling's famous warning that "The Hun is at the gate," and although the Scottish poet Neil Monro may have thought it expedient to pray, "O God! preserve inviolate / Our ancient island Home!"[18] most of their fellow-poets appear simply to have assumed that the combined presence of the sea and the British navy was sufficient to perform the task, without any special call for help, divine or otherwise. It is possible, however, that the tone of assurance and invincibility which characterises the English patriotic verse is the literary inheritance of at least two decades of similar poetry based on a firm belief in the insuperability of the British Empire, rather than the result of rational argument or historical fact. In either case, free from the necessity of (verbally) defending the fatherland, the English poets who sought to justify their country's involvement were able to concentrate their poetic energy on idealistic matters.

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[18] "For All We Have and Are," Songs and Sonnets, p. 92; "Evening Prayer of a People," ibid, p. 39.

The most obvious "just cause" was the support of that "'little' but loyal race," the Belgians.[19] Seeking revenge for

> These smoking hearths of fair and peaceful lands,
> This reeking trail of deeds abhorred in Hell,[20]

Englishmen are urged to "Haste to the help of a brave nation smitten"; they can claim to be "fighting for Belgium's honour and homes" or "Fending a little friend, / Weak but unshaken," and are reminded, in a congratulatory manner, "Ye are holding in your hands / Liberty of little lands, / Seeking nothing, giving all."[21] Unlike the Germans, who, as several poems remind us, have dealt with the treaty (unspecified, but presumably that of 1839 guaranteeing Belgian neutrality) as a "scrap of paper," "torn in pieces," Britain refuses to have anything to do with "a false, fair-weather friendship," since "To what England puts her hand, / Upon that she takes her stand," and since "contracting out of danger were for ever her disgrace."[22] In this way, involvement in the war becomes a matter of fighting not only for Belgium and "For the future and fame of France," but of "fighting for Britain's honour, too; / For the faith of her plighted word."[23]

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[19] Coulson Kernahan, "To 'Little' Belgium," *Songs and Sonnets*, p. 21.

[20] Owen Seaman, "The Avengers," in H. B. Elliott, ed., *Lest We Forget* (London: Jarrold, 1915), p. 56.

[21] James Silvester, "Sound the Alarm," in Charles F. Forshaw, ed., *One Hundred of the Best Poems on the European War* (London: Elliot Stock, 1915), I, p. 164; James Lill, "The Issues," Forshaw, I, 120; Charles William Brodribb, "Expeditional," George Herbert Clarke, ed., *A Treasury of War Poetry: British and American Poems of the World War 1914-1919* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, [1919]), p. 45; R.Gorell Barnes, "To the British Army," *Songs and Sonnets*, pp. 79-80.

As far as poetry is concerned, the main logic behind Britain's joining the war, therefore, was the altruistic motive of fighting for the freedom of Belgium from German occupation. The less altruistic possibility that an occupied Belgium posed a direct threat to British territory was ignored by most of the poets (and possibly by the country at large, since the initial British military involvement was called an "expeditionary force," as if the war were in a remote part of the world).[24] Obviously, noble motives were more appealing than practical politics, for many poets were able without apparent difficulty to convert the intention of helping their neighbour into the conviction that the country was fighting for a variety of high ideals. Freedom and Liberty, capitalised and without a qualifying "from," are presented as a "holy cause," together with Justice and, more enigmatic, "the Right." However, the chief motivating factor is the all-embracing concept of Honour, which calls England to war in Owen Seaman's "Pro

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[22] Ian Colvin, "The Answer," Songs and Sonnets, pp. 15-17.

[23] Lill, "The Issues," Forshaw, I, 120.

[24] An exception is Colvin's "The Answer," where the Germans try to bargain with England to stay out of the war by promising to leave the Belgian ports unoccupied. Songs and Sonnets, pp. 15-17.

Patria," in Ian Colvin's "The Answer," R. G. Barnes' "To the British Army," and in many another poem.[25]

Britain, with the least powerful "territorial" motive, was probably in the best position to indulge in such illogical "highmindedness," but there is no intended suggestion that she held the field unchallenged. For example, few poems in any of the three languages carry such a weight of idealism as the single line in one of Fabre Des Esseints' "Quatre sonnets de guerre," where he states the cause as "Le Droit, le Bien, l'Honneur, la France et la Justice."[26] On the whole, for any patriotic poem in English which deals with high ideals, a counterpart can be found in the other languages, especially German. In the matter of Honour, for instance, while many true-blooded Englishmen may have subscribed to Bridges' view that "England stands for Honour," Paul Warncke considered quite a different country to be the "Land der Treu und Ehre."[27] In several English poems, God is asked to "defend the Right," yet a German poet, with equal conviction, insists, "Wir Freien fechten für Reich und Recht."[28] The survival of humanity is seen as dependant, variously, on the continued existence of the English--"Who dies if England live?" of Germany--"wenn wir fallen, fällt die Welt"--and of France--"France, sans Toi le monde serait seul," and "tu es / La sainte nation qui sauvera le monde."[29]

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[25] Songs and Sonnets, p. 26; p. 15; p. 79.

[26] Turpin, I, 79.

[27] "Vaterlandslied," Sturm: Kriegsgedichte (Berlin: Hofmann, 1915), p. 84.

[28] Friedrich Lienhard, "Stolz und Liebe," Heldentum und Liebe (Stuttgart: Greiner und Pfeiffer, 1915), p. 27.

The French, proud of their Classical heritage, of the "fiers aïeux, ces Grecs et ces Romains, / Dont l'écho dit encor [sic] les exploits surhumains," and of their "âme latine / Eprise d'Art et d'Idéal," are particularly attached to the idea that their cause is the general human good.[30] For example, Victorin Baret, promising that France and her allies "imposeront le joug a l'Ostrogoth immonde," justifies the proposed conquest of German territory on the grounds that "C'est pour l'Humanité que nous travaillerons," "pour le progrès du genre humain."[31] In a later poem, where a hope for peace has replaced the desire for revenge, the poet remains adamantly patriotic--the peace which is to bring "un ordre nouveau pour l'Humanité" will be "la Paix Française."[32] Although the conviction that the country's role is vital for the well-being of humanity is, as expressed in the poetry, more characteristically French, the Germans are not to be completely out-done. Friedrich Lienhard is perhaps the strongest proponent of the "deutsche Sendung," which he sees as "das *Herz* zu sein, / Das fortan allen Völkern Sonne schafft," or "Den Völkern ein Hort zu sein, / Europas heiliger Hain."[33] For Lienhard the cultural centre, "Deutschlands Herz," is Weimar, with Bayreuth of almost equal importance. He berates those people from abroad who had previously visited the two cities to do homage to Goethe and Wagner respectively, but who are now intent upon destroying the country which gave them "Geist."[34] As might be expected of the proverbially pragmatic English, their mission towards humanity is neither cultural nor spiritual, but is expressed mainly in terms of the continuing existence of the Empire, of "Old England's righteous sway." Its value ranges from the purely practical--"I have cleansed the seas, and have opened them / To traffic of many ships"--to the fulfilment of the Empire's idealistic potential--

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[29] Kipling, "For All We Have and Are," *Songs and Sonnets*, p. 92; R. A. Schröder, "Zum 1. August 1914," *Heilig Vaterland* (Leipzig: Insel, 1914), p. 7; Gabriele d'Annunzio, "A la France," Turpin, II, 17; Beauduin, "Crédo," p. 30.

[30] Fabre des Essarts, "Joffre," Turpin, I, 80; Jeanne-Bénita Azaïs, "Ode aux soldats de France," Turpin, II, 21.

[31] "La Guerre," Turpin, I, 15.

[32] "Désirs de paix," Turpin, I, 17.

> Her increase
> Abolishes the man-dividing seas,
> And frames the brotherhood on earth to be!
> She, in free peoples planting sovereignty,
> Orbs half the civil world in British peace

(a peace which, one must assume, is somehow different from Baret's "Paix Française," noted above).[35]

As proof of the superiority of their national culture, poets in all three languages are ever ready to call up the names of their country's famous men. In the matter of military heroes, Germany's champion is Bismarck, with

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[33] "Deutsche Sendung," Heldentum, p. 33; "Heerschau," p. 36.

[34] "Den Gästen von Bayreuth," ibid., pp. 31-32.

[35] John R. Palmer, "Pro Patria," Forshaw, I, 149; Gilbert Cannan, "The Spirit of England," Songs and Sonnets, p. 50; and George Edward Woodberry, "Sonnets Written in the Autumn of 1914, II," Clarke (1919), p. 143.

Frederick the Great and Wallenstein (whose fame may be literary rather than military) receiving "honourable mention." France refrains from vaunting the success of Napoleon, possibly through tact, but more probably because he was not sufficiently "saintly." Instead, French poets prefer to look back to pre-Revolutionary martyrs like Jeanne d'Arc and the legendary Roland for national heroes. Britain, on the other hand, is well-endowed with military figures on whom to call, including Henry the Fifth, Marlborough and Wellington, and especially admirals such as Drake and Nelson. However, when important people from the humanities are required, Germany, "das Volk der Dichter und Denker,"[36] is far in the lead. French poets summon up Corneille and Racine occasionally, while their English counterparts, in spite of a claim that England is "the home of poetry,"[37] seem to be limited to Shakespeare. Meanwhile, the Germans refer liberally to Goethe and Schiller, Luther and Kant, as well as Wagner, Bach and Beethoven, and a host of lesser figures.

However, if such famous names from the past may be summoned for the purpose of proving a superior degree of civilisation, they are also available to emphasise, through contrast, the present barbarous state of the nation concerned. Thus Friedrich Lienhard's horror at Germany's betrayal by "die Gäste von Bayreuth" is expressed equally strongly from the other side. Maurice Allou argues that "La grande âme de Goethe est un mirage et meurt,"[38] while William Archer imagines "Luther, Kant, Goethe, Bach, and Beethoven" disowning as compatriots the Germans who have sacked Louvain.[39] Kathleen Knox regrets the passing of the "childhood land" of the fairy tales, the "music land" and the "learned land of wise old books," for none of these can co-exist with a "land of hate."[40] Conversely, the Germans feel that it the English who have abandoned their cultural heritage. According to Richard Schaukal, for instance, England, which had always been "die erlauchte Schule" for the Germans, a "Walterin auf hohem Stuhle," has now shown them a different face, betraying both the Magna Carta and Shakespeare.[41]

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[36] "Caliban," "The Hun is at the gate," Karl Quenzel, ed., Des Vaterlandes Hochgesang (Leipzig: Hesse und Becker, 1915), p. 142.

[37] Leonard van Noppen, "England," Clarke (1919), p. 52.

Although some historians point to rivalry between Germany and Britain as one of the existing conditions which precipitated the outbreak of war, such an attitude is reflected in only a small part of the poetry. Rather, the two sides express in general a sense of mutual disillusionment when they find themselves at war, as though each had understood and approved of the other's actions in the pre-war years. (In France, it should be noted, such disillusionment with Germany's conduct is far less prevalent.) Masks appear as a recurring symbol for the sense of betrayal--"Nun sind die Masken alle rings gefallen," "England! du nahmst die Maske fort / Mit kalten, zynischen Gebärden," "And now the mask is down," "You, that flung / The gauntlet down, fling down the mask you wore"--to quote a few examples from amongst many.[42] With the masks removed, some long-standing prejudices of "national character" come to the fore. For the Germans, the Englishman's main characteristic is his cunning, the old image of "perfidious Albion." H. H. Ewers refers to him as "der Lügenbrite,"[43] and Ernst Lissauer, in the notorious "Hassgesang gegen England," tells how

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[38] *Strophes d'acier* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1919), p. 21.

[39] "Louvain," Elliott, p. 69.

[40] "A Lost Land," Clarke (1919), pp. 159-60.

[41] *1914: Eherne Sonette* (München: Georg Müller, 1914), p. 19.

> Er sitzt geduckt hinter der grauen Flut,
> Voll Neid, voll Wut, voll Schläue, voll List.[44]

Lissauer's poem, described by one German newspaper as "vielleicht das volkstümlichste Gedicht der neuen Zeit,"[45] was the subject of several articles in The Times and appeared in translation in Britain, France and America as anti-German propaganda.[46] To insult the Germans, French poets draw upon the image of Dark Ages invaders--"Le Vandale," "le torrent ravageur," "les barbares," les hordes d'Attila." The effect is somewhat spoiled when one finds Germans, in a "little fleas and lesser fleas" sort of progression, referring to their enemies from the east in the same terms. For example, Paul Warncke calls the Russians "die heulenden, mordenden Scharen / Wüster Barbaren," while R. A. Schröder is content with a less venemous "Attilas Barbarenheer."[47]

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[42] Karl Strecker, "Die Kriegeserklärung Englands," Bab, I, 9; "Wilhelm der Grosse," Ludwig Ganghofer et al., Deutsches Flugblatt, (München: Goltz, 1914), p. 8; Owen Seaman, "Dies Irae," Elliott, p. 53; William Watson, "To the Troubler of the World," Songs and Sonnets, p. 1.

[43] "Wir und die Welt," Deutsche Kriegslieder (New York: The Fatherland, 1915), p. 8. Ewers' collection has as an appendix a group of poems translated into German, under the title "Deutschfreundliche Stimmen in Amerika--Kriegslieder amerikanischer, jüdischer und irischer Dichter."

[44] "Hassgesang gegen England," Volkmann, p. 92.

[45] Kölnische Zeitung, 1915, quoted by Volkmann, p. 296.

English writers seem to have favoured the term "Hun" as an insulting designation for the Germans; that their message reached its goal is indicated by a German poem entitled "The Hun is at the gate," which appeared in *Der Tag* in 1914. (The title is a quotation from Kipling's "For All We Have and Are.") The author, "Caliban," suggests sardonically that "Tommy Atkins, der Auswurf von Eastend," is "feinste Kultur unter Lack," while the German army, made up of "Beamter und Kaufmann, Professor, Student, / Handwerker und Künstler," is merely a "Hunnenpack."[48] In this poem and elsewhere, "Caliban" deplores on racial grounds the enemy's choice of allies; here he comments unfavourably on the involvement of the Japanese and of "Zuaven und Schützen von Senegal," while in "Der Nothelfer" his sarcasm is directed against the statesmen who brought "die Sepoys" into the war.[49] "Caliban"'s attitude is reflected in the writing of several other poets--for instance, Richard Schaukal and Edgar Steiger also protest the Japanese involvement, chiefly on racial grounds, while Adolf Ey reminds the English of their bloodkinship with the Germans ("Trotz allem sind wir doch durch Blut verbunden").[50] B. R. M. Hetherington's "The Patriot" offers racism with a difference--instead of the different skin colour or the "Schlitzgesichter," as "Caliban" calls them, of the enemy, Hetherington points to the physical characteristics which distinguish lower-class members of his own society from the rest of the race:

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[46] The Imperial War Museum has *The German Hymn of Hate*, put out by the Central Committee for National Patriotic Organisations, and *Un Chant de haine contre l'Angleterre*, trans. Lina Bémont, reprinted from *La Revue Historique*, 119 (1915). A pamphlet published in Australia--with the words "Season's Greetings" on the cover--consists of a poem by Arthur A. Adams, entitled "My Friend, Remember! Lines Written on Reading Lissauer's Chant of Hate," and a tranlation of Lissauer's poem by Barbara Henderson. (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, [1915].) *Das literarische Echo* of 15. Dezember 1914 also prints an English version (pp. 378-379).

[47] "Ostpreussen," *Sturm*, p. 46; "Zum 1. August 1914," *Heilig Vaterland*, p. 7.

> Low-browed, ill-nourished, fostered in a slum,
> He had no pride of birthright nor of breed;
> Yet when his country's hour of stress was come,
> Stood up a man indeed!
>
> The stunted mind that laboured dim and dark
> Behind that narrow forehead gave small sign,
> Till War reached out a hand and lit a spark,
> There, of a fire divine.[51]

While it must be admitted that Hetherington is not unique in expressing surprise that ordinary working men can become good patriotic soldiers, his poem is unusually condescending.

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[48] Reprinted in Quenzel, p. 142.

[49] "Der Nothelfer," ibid., p. 143.

[50] Schaukal, "An Japan," 1914, p. 30; Steiger, "Tsingtau," Alfred Biese, ed., Poesie des Krieges (Berlin: Grote, 1915), p. 54; Ey, "Der deutsche Michel und John Bull," Bab, II, 35.

[51] Macdonald and Ford, p. 56.

When Ernst Lissauer in his "Hassgesang" dismisses the French and Russians with the words "Was schiert uns Russe und Franzos'," to concentrate his hatred against England, he is expressing an opinion shared by many German poets. Ernst Volkmann, examining this "arch-enemy" phenomenon in the introduction to his anthology, suggests as its primary reason "die unerwartete, als unfair [sic] empfundene Kriegserklärung Englands," which added an incalculable element to the anticipated emnity of France and Russia.[52] He lists some twenty authors who wrote "Kriegs- und Hassgesänge gegen England," and there are certainly many more such poems to be found. By contrast, Volkmann says, poems about Russia display a consciousness of moral and political superiority rather than hatred, while the relatively few directed against France are dominated by "ein leiser, von Achtung durchklungener Ton des Bedauerns," with the exception of those written by "Alt-Elsässer" such as Lienhard and Karl Hackenschmidt.[53]

Although one of Lienhard's poems attempts to put the blame for the war on "Der König, der einst unser Elsass geraubt, / Der vierzehnte Ludwig,"[54] English and French writers tend to place it upon the shoulders of a more modern ruler, Wilhelm II. The German emperor is addressed as "Destroyer of cities and temples, / Vandal of Louvain and Rheims," "Marplot of war, Knight of the tarnished mail," and "the Troubler of the World"; he is described as "le Néron fou des Allemagnes," "Guillaume le bandit, Guillaume le vampire," and as "this monster" who "has declared / 'Meinself und Gott, will conquerors rise.'"[55] A prize for the most vituperative poem of the war would almost certainly go to one of those in English which attack the German emperor-- Abel Aaronson's "To the Kaiser," perhaps--

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[52] Volkmann, p. 46.
[53] Ibid., pp. 43-44.
[54] "Münstergespräch," Lienhard, p. 45.

> You shameless, perjured, soul-lost renegade,
> You vile abortion in the form of man;
> The eternal future you for self have slayed,
> The basest creature since the world began
> You loathsome, monstrous, most unholy thing,[56]

or possibly William Watson's "To the German Emperor, after the Sack of Louvain":

> Wherefore are men amazed at thee, thou Blot
> On the fair script of Time, thou sceptred Smear
> Across the Day?[57]

The degree to which the Kaiser is held personally responsible for the worst German outrages is matched by the adulation he receives at home. His name occurs widely in the German poetry, especially on the occasions of his visits to the trenches or hospitals, or his birthday, and there is at least one book, Heil, Kaiser, Dir! devoted entirely to such poems.[58] The only other ruler to receive comparable support in verse is King Albert of Belgium, who is the subject of many poems in both English and French (the latter mostly by French rather than Belgian writers), and who clearly serves as a focal-point in much the same way as the German emperor, though for a different purpose. Interestingly enough, King George the Fifth plays no similar role as a figurehead, either as beneficent leader or as arch-fiend. For instance, in three typical anthologies, Forshaw's One Hundred Best Poems of the War, Elliott's Lest We Forget and Edwards' and Booth's The Fiery Cross, all representative of the most common patriotic usage in English, one finds many poems on the subject of the Kaiser, several about King Albert (and one addressed to his wife Elisabeth), but only one concerning the English king, James Elroy Flecker's "God Save the King."[59] When German poets require a personification of English treachery and wickedness, they usually choose John Bull. However, the slogan, "Your king and country need you," and various rephrasings of it, as well as the cliche, "serving the king," seem to be far more common in the English poetry than their counterpart ("Der Kaiser hat gerufen") in representative German anthologies.

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[55] C. Donner, "Kaiser Wilhelm the Sower," Forshaw, I, 59; H. H. Chamberlin, "To Wilhelm II," Donald Tulloch, ed., Songs and Poems of the Great War (Worcester, Mass.: Davis Press, 1915), p. 253; Watson, "To the Troubler of the World," Songs and Sonnets, p. 1; Beauduin, "Dyptique--L'Empereur fourbe," L'Offrande héroïque, p. 14. A. Prieur, "Guillaume veut la paix," Turpin, I, 166; G. H. Wilson, "The Mad Kaiser's Folly," Forshaw, I, 189.

[56] Forshaw, I, 11.

[57] The Man Who Saw (London: John Murray, 1917), p. 27.

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[58] Ed. Reinhold Braun (Hamburg: Agentur des Rauhen Hauses Biedermann, 1917).

[59] Elliott, pp. 137-38.

Each country is firmly convinced that God is its ally, but the possibility of divided loyalty is usually dismissed on the grounds that the enemy is not a true believer. The majority of poems are straightforward, confident that God will know which "Right" to defend, but a few poets are more reflective and concerned with the subtleties of a situation which sees Christian nations fighting against each other. Hermann Keinzl, for instance, recognises that "Gott ist mit uns, er wird den Feind verderben!" is a statement common to Germans, British, French, Japanese, and others.[60] He concludes that, since God is obviously "Kein Fähnrich und kein Kugellenker," the Germans must live in a God-fearing manner so that their ultimate victory, though achieved through their own strength, will be a victory for God. J. J. Brown, in "War and Christ," suggests that the war is in fact a judgment upon all, that even "Belgium has its Congo deeds to rue; / Poland its pogroms; Europe has its crimes." Like other thoughtful poets, he is troubled by the discrepancy between Christian teaching and the call for war, and asks that the task of punishing evil should be left to God.[61] In Germany, Will Vesper and Hans Schmidt-Kestner both confront the Christian edict, "Liebe deine Feinde," but feel that, in the present instance, they are unable to obey.[62] Schmidt-Kestner asks for forgiveness, and promises to love his enemies again when they have been driven "Ins allertiefste Kellerloch," while Vesper pleads that his hatred is "die Frucht der höchsten Liebe." On the other hand Pastor H. A. F. Tech, the author of Kampfreime eines Friedfertigen aus dem Kriegsjahre 1914, who reflects upon many aspects of the war in an attempt to reconcile the requirements of Christianity and love of the "fatherland," is particularly insistent that "Von Gott erwählt ist nur der Christ."[63]

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[60] "Der nationale Gott," Bab, IV, 7.

[61] Forshaw, pp. 41-42.

[62] W. Vesper, "Liebe oder Hass?" Bab, IV, 6, H. Schmidt-Kestner, "Gebet des deutschen Wehrmanns, Bab, I, 19.

Another question which, like the religious aspect, provokes some degree of reflection in a few poets, but is answered quite simplistically by the majority, is that of placing blame for the start of the war. In general, it seems certain that neither side made the first move, nor did either wish to fight. The English maintain that "Came this challenge from the foe; / Naught we did to court this fight," and they "can verily say," according to William Watson, "'Our hands are pure; for peace, for peace we have striven.'"[64] In Germany the same theme is repeated many times--"Wir haben den Krieg nicht gewollt!" (Hanns Johst), "Ihr habt den Krieg gewollt, nun habt ihr ihn!" (Karl Hackenschmidt), "Ihr habts gewollt, nicht wir!" (R. A. Schröder).[65] When John Drinkwater uses almost precisely the same phrase, "We Willed it Not," one is reminded clearly that this is a feud "between kin folk kin tongued," as Thomas Hardy described it.[66]

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[63] "Das auserwählte Volk," p. 30.

[64] R. M. Freeman, "The War Cry," Songs and Sonnets, p. 28; Watson, "The Fourth of August, 1914," The Man Who Saw, p. 25.

[65] Hanns Johst, "Der Sturm bricht los!" Volkmann, p. 55; Karl Hackenschmidt, "An die Hetzer," ibid., p. 82; R. A. Schröder, Heilig Vaterland, p. 9.

Poets who are less anxious to apportion blame are much harder to find. In "Wir Wollen ...," Alfred Kerr suggests that there is no point in asking "wie alles ward," because the survival of Germany is now all that matters.[67] Edward Thomas recognises that the war is "no case of petty right or wrong." He considers that he is not required to judge justice or injustice, and commits himself to the war because, like Kerr, he believes his homeland is worth defending.[68] Charles Sorley's position, in "To Germany," is more remote and dissociated, and the poem displays unusual perception. He imagines Germany and England as blind, "gropers both through fields of thought confined," stumbling into war.[69] Writing half-a-century later, the historian A. J. P. Taylor provided examples of such "fields of thoughts confined," when he said that, in one way, "Schlieffen, Chief of the German General Staff from 1892 to 1906, though dead, was the real maker of the First World War," and that statesmen, using bluff and threat as on previous occasions, "became prisoners of their own weapons" and were unable to prevent the conflict.[70] It is sad to realise that, of all the thousands of poems with which the war was greeted, so few offered any hint of impartiality and a sense of perspective like that of Sorley.

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[66] Clarke (1919), p. 146; "The Pity of It," Satires of Circumstance (London: Macmillan, 1919), p. 389.

[67] "Wir wollen," Bab, I, 8.

[68] Collected Poems (London: Selwyn and Blount, 1920), p. 168.

[69] Marlborough and Other Poems (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1916), p. 73.

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[70] The First World War (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), p. 20; p. 16.

IV. Conventions of Patriotic Verse

Despite the difference in underlying tone in the patriotic verse of the three languages--the air of invincibility in the English, of determination in the German, and of enjoyed martyrdom in the French--the poetry in other respects is strikingly similar from one group to the others. The likeness is so marked that Great War patriotic verse may justifiably be regarded as a special literary convention--one might even say genre--related to the patriotic poetry of earlier periods, but distinctive in the intensity of its cliche-like usage, and in its homogeneity from poem to poem and from country to country. Similarities extend far beyond the initial thematic criterion of patriotic expression related to the particular circumstances of 1914 to 1918, to encompass many other aspects of the writing. The poems have a common function or Kunstwollen, in that their intention is recognisably propagandist. In addition to an attitude of unquestioning dedication to the cause of the homeland, there is a correspondingly strong antithetical reaction against the enemy, to the extent that hate, rather than love, seems to be the inspiration of many of the poems. They are characterised by a grandiloquent style of writing, and by a severely limited vocabulary made up of words which bear little relation to everyday life. At a time when experimental poetry was "news," very few patriotic poets chose anything other than traditional verse forms, with definite metric and rhyme schemes. While their choice is not necessarily to be interpreted as reflecting a conservative or retrospective outlook, since traditional poetry was still the norm for the general population, it is remarkable how few poets of experimental bent chose to write patriotically (or at least refrained from mingling patriotism with new poetic expression).

The taste for grandiloquence is so persistent that Paul Fussell is able to provide a long list of what he calls "raised" words which are to be found in the English poetry--such terms as "steed," "the foe," "swift," "staunch" or "vanquish"--and one could easily make a similar list for the French and German verse.[1] An interesting example of the particularly "elevated" nature of the Great War writing is supplied by the work of a little-known French poet, G.. A. Fauré, whose collection Mes Impressions sur la guerre 1914-15-16 is augmented with poems which he wrote during the conflict of 1870-71. For instance, in an 1870 poem, "L'Exemple," Fauré wrote simply "il veut être vainqueur demain," while in 1915 he phrased the same idea in a much more grandiloquent manner--"Il veut, dans une grande bataille, / Sur l'ennemi être triomphant."[2] Fussell calls the terms in his gloss "essentially feudal"; most of the adjectives commonly used by the patriotic poets would have been quite at home in heroic or courtly epics--"bold," "strong," "beau," "treu," "vaillant," "gallant," "ernst," "rein," "fier," "heilig," "steadfast," "wahr," "glorieux," "brave," "sacré," "feig," "noble," "rich," "héroïque," "saint," "kräftig," "blutig," (or "sanglant"), "ehern," "brazen," "golden." It might be argued that the words listed here are all in common circulation, but the point must be made that, as far as the patriotic verse is concerned, this list contains almost the entire stock of adjectives. Most of them refer to abstract qualities, and the paucity of descriptive words ensures that there is little precise visual effect. It is noticeable, for instance, that the poetry uses very few adjectives of colour, and those that recur are so consistently only red, brown, golden and white that the "jaune et noir" of the Belgian flag (in the book title _Le Rouge, jaune et noir_, for example[3]) seems quite out of place.

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[1] Fussell, p. 21-22.

The narrow range of vocabulary, together with the general "high-sounding" tone, creates a gap between the words and their supposed referent, leaving the impression that the poets work entirely in abstractions, rather than through any contact with reality. "Happy is England in the brave that die!"[4] cannot be read at its face value, and lines like

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[2] _Mes Impressions sur la guerre 1914-15-16_ (printed Nevers, 1916), p. 8, p. 22.

[3] Gaston Bourgeois (Bruxelles: Larcier, 1919).

> Héros! jeunes ou vieux, que votre tâche est belle!
> Votre sang répandu fait la France immortelle[5]

seem to bear more relation to the stage heroism of a character of Racine than to the gruelling life and death of soldiers. For example, it is hard to equate this idea of "sang répandu" with the "real" blood in Henry-Jacques' "Le Charnier"--"Sous eux le sang s'étale et noircit au soleil."[6] The impression of a vast distance between the actual fighting and war as the poets saw it is increased by the use of terminology of the age of chivalry and of "battles long ago." A modern reader whose knowledge of the Great War arose mainly from its patriotic verse would assume that the primary weapon available to the armies of 1914 was the sword, that men were called to join the army by the beating of drums, and that the troops went into battle following a flag. This persistent archaic imagery was often coupled with book illustrations depicting the accoutrements of earlier wars, and although most of the swords, shields and vigils in the poetry are recognisably metaphorical, the imagery served as a buffer against the reality of a war of modern weapons and mass destruction. More important, however, was its role in bolstering belief in the myths associated with patriotism. J. K. Galbraith writes, in The

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[4] John Freeman, "Happy is England Now," Hussey, p. 64.

[5] Clement Chanteloube, "Deux ans après," Turpin, I, 51.

[6] "Le Charnier," Nous... de la guerre (Paris: Fernand Sorlot, 1940), p. 92.

Age of Uncertainty,

> "Myth has always been especially important where war was concerned. Men must have a fairly elevated motive for getting themselves killed. To die to protect or enhance the wealth, power or privilege of someone else, the most common reason for conflict over the centuries, lacks beauty."[7]

The cluster of myths which inspired the poets, and possibly the combatants, of 1914, included the belief that heroism was its own reward, that to die for the homeland was a virtue--and even a privilege--and that the code of honour which governed knightly conduct was as relevant in the twentieth century as it had been (in literature at least) in the twelfth.

Of all the conventional practices which characterise the patriotic verse of the Great War, the most prevalent is the choice of a collective first person *persona*. In almost every poem, the voice which speaks identifies itself quite explicitly as "we," and even when the *persona* is hidden, a single pronoun or possessive adjective often serves as a reminder that the poetic "consciousness" is plural and collective. It is worth noting that neither French nor German poets resort to the impersonal pronoun, *on* or *man*, but choose the more definite forms *nous* and *wir*. The implications of the use of "we" are far-reaching, and most of them play on the assumption, traditional in European lyric poetry through much of the nineteenth century, that the "voice" is to be equated with the "empirical self" of the poet. In the first place, because of this "confessional" proclivity, the first person plural persona allows the poet to identify himself and to be identified with others in the group which his particular "we" encompasses. Secondly, it implies his readiness to surrender his individuality in the cause of the collective good, thus emphasising the totality of his commitment to the homeland. At the same time, however, by placing the writer in a position more obviously similar to that of a dramatist vis-à-vis his characters, who may or may not voice his own opinions, it detracts from the supposed "confessional" nature of the relationship between poet and persona. Thus his "we" voice allows the poet to have the best of both worlds, for it is recognised by the reader as part of the convention that the feelings and ideas expressed through the "we" persona must not necessarily have a direct referent in the poet's own life, except to the extent that he is part of the collective group.

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[7] *The Age of Uncertainty* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), p. 111.

The role of the reader is also affected by the use of "we." When a poet adopts a first person singular persona, or even when there is no explicit "voice," his words are directed towards an implied reader, who is a distinctive "you," or at least "other." If he chooses the "we" form, such a distinction between speaker and reader is weakened, since the reader is encompassed by and implicated in the poet's statement. Because the initial fact upon which the poem rests is that "we"--voice or poet and implicit reader--

are compatriots, and because almost every contemporary reader of the poem in its original language belonged to that category, the possibility for identification between implied and actual reader was strong. Accordingly, the all-embracing persona served as an effective device for propaganda, affording no possibility of dissociation and requiring of the reader a degree of commitment to his country comparable to that of the speaker. For example, Karl Strecker's confident "Wir zagen nicht, bricht auch die Welt zusammen"[8] is persuasive as well as assertive, particularly with its present tense predicting the future as an absolute, just as Laurence Binyon's "We step from days of sour division / Into the grandeur of our fate" eliminates the possibility of continued disunity by linking all readers into the same destiny.[9]

Because the "we" voice speaks on behalf of "all of us," it must express feelings and opinions which the poet can reasonably assume to be widely shared. There is, accordingly, a rejection of an esoteric or academic approach in favour of material which is easily understood, and a deliberate avoidance of subtle or complex arguments. In this way the "we" persona emphasises the tendency of patriotism towards a simplistic and extreme viewpoint. As the previous chapter showed, patriotic poetry of the Great War places "us" and "the enemy" in total polarity, with all common meeting ground of mutual respect, shared interests and, even, humanity relegated to the past. With speaker and implicit reader sharing the same extreme position, objective argument is irrelevant. Opening books at random, one finds many such lines as "Wir haben lang erduldet / Den dreisten Hohn aus schlechtem Mund" or "Torn away from loved homes to hurl the savage back," in which almost every phrase is biased and judgmental.[10] It is noticeable that, of the numerous poems on the subject of Edith Cavell, a Red Cross nurse executed as a spy, which were printed in Georges Turpin's anthology _Les Poètes de la guerre_, the only one which contains no invective against the Germans, and which tells how the nurse forgave her German executioner, totally avoids the "we" voice.[11]

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[8] "Die Kriegserklärung Englands," Bab, I, 9.
[9] "The Fourth of August," Binyon, p. 23.

Having committed themselves to a public _persona_, the patriotic poets are restricted not only to widely-shared sentiments and an extremist view-point, but also to non-specific locations, incidents and people, because these must have meaning for the populace at large. Place is usually indicated by a general term like "each village," "cities," "land and sea," and there is an abundance of "men," "mothers," "heroes," and, collectively, "man," but rarely an individual (apart from the very famous, who are, after all, "public" figures). The refusal to link the words to anything more than such an unspecific reality strengthens the impression that the poets deal entirely in generalisations and abstractions, and also helps to explain why the poetry displays little variety in vocabulary. Even allowing for the inevitable distance between the fictional "world" which literature posits and empirical reality, patriotic poetry is distinctly "unrealistic," because its world is consistently unspecific.

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[10] R.A.Schröder, "An die deutschen Krieger," Volkmann, p. 57; Laurence Gomme, "The Call," Elliott, p. 48.

[11] Aimé Cazal, "À Miss Cavell," Turpin, II, 46.

In all three languages there is a marked tendency for "we" poems to be addressed to various embodiments of "you." It is hard to know whether this combination results from the choice of the oratorical manner--odes, for example, are by tradition often spoken through a first person plural _persona_ --or whether the use of "we," by allowing "voice" and implicit reader to be, so to speak, on the same side, encourages the poet to address his lines to a third party. "You" may be the native land, ("Ostpreussen, einsames Land!" "O France, c'est pour toi!"), war itself, ("Heiliges Feuer, brenn durch's Land"), allied countries, the Christian God under various names, a pagan deity, famous people (usually dead) such as Bismarck, Lord Roberts, Edith Cavell, the Kaiser, either _pro_ or _contra_, and, very commonly, the "heroic dead," the "fighting men," and the enemy. Because such poems assume the form of a public address or speech, and because speeches which, like the poetry, are of political intent, are notoriously prejudiced and lacking in subtlety, the public address format emphasises those aspects.

The all-prevailing "we" implies as its opposite "they," which, given the war situation, one would assume to refer to the opposing forces. However, the enemy is more frequently addressed directly in the second person, except when the "you" role is already filled by someone else, such as God or the home-country. The primary function of the "we-they" dichotomy in all three languages is to distinguish between civilians and combatants. Biographical information appears to confirm that most of the patriotic poetry was written from a civilian standpoint, either by soldiers who were still in training at home, or, in a far larger degree, by people whom the circumstances of age, sex or ill-health restricted from active service. This rather surprising "we-they" opposition in the poetry anticipates from the reverse angle what many later writers were to perceive as one of the major polarities of the war, the distinction between those who fought and those who "sat safe at home and let us die" (as Margery Lawrence phrased it on behalf of the combatants in Mesopotamia.)[12] Even so, the patriotic writers' "we-they" opposition should not be dismissed as nothing more than the proverbial division between men of words and men of deeds, because it provides a key to understanding the importance of the poetry to contemporary readers and writers, and perhaps the reason why patriotic verse affords so little interest today, except as a piece of history.

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[12] A. E. Macklin, ed., The Lyceum Book of War Verse (London: Erskine Macdonald, 1918), p. 48.

In a war-time situation, the most appropriate expression of patriotic love is to undertake to fight for the cause of the homeland, and to be prepared to die in fulfilment of that love. Prevented by circumstances from making the physical "statement" in which many of their compatriots particated with great enthusiasm, and lacking the general civilian involvement which was to characterise the next European war, those who were compelled to stay at home had to be content with an entirely verbal commitment. Although the comparison may seem rather obtuse, the part which poetry played in relation to their sense of patriotism and their social identity has considerable affinity with the songs of the troubadours and Minnesänger in the medieval convention of courtly love, and placing the two diverse types of love-poetry side by side shows quite clearly how the patriotic poetry functioned.

In courtly love, the song was performed by the troubadour or Minnesänger as an act of service, but in a more complex sense than simply "earning one's keep," the essence of the service being an explicit or implied declaration of love. It was the ability to write convincingly about love which ensured the poet's acceptance at the court, for, as the preface to In Pursuit of Perfection, a study of courtly love in medieval literature, explains, "It is his love which defines the poet as a member of [the courtly] class. Love makes him noble, for if he were not noble, he could not love," and "he must declare his love because his own courtly identity depends on it."[13] Almost precisely the same quest for a sense of identity motivated the writer of patriotic verse in the Great War. By declaring his love for his homeland and his hatred of the enemy, he established himself both in his own eyes and before his fellow-countrymen as a devoted patriot, who could be seen to have taken a stand on behalf of the country. On the other hand, like the love of the troubadour, whose pretensions to his lady's person were recognised by his audience as being strictly verbal, the patriotic poet's devotion was expected to be valid only within the context of the poem, that is, within the terms of the literary convention. In each case the words were not a mere prelude to the act of love, but the fulfilment of it.

For the poets in both groups, their writing served its purpose only if it was made public. The growth of the poetry of courtly love was dependent on the existence of a settled and wealthy society to provide an audience, as the flourishing of patriotic verse would have been impossible without the favourable literary climate which allowed the poetry to be published. At the same time, just as the fact of lending support to a successful troubadour enhanced the reputation of a particular lord, so twentieth-century publishers seem to have recognised the benefit of being associated with patriotic verse. The patriotic poet's readers, like the courtly audience, were well versed in all aspects of their particular literary convention, its "repertory of essential themes" and its special terminology, to the extent that what Frederick Goldin says of courtly love poetry might also be written of patriotic verse: "The song we read today was first written as an arrangement of the audience's expectations."[14] Goldin and other more recent critics are inclined to emphasise the deliberately "fictional" and literary character of courtly love, and their approach finds a counterpart in Edward Thomas' review of patriotic war poetry in the December 1914 issue of Poetry and Drama :

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[13] Joan M.Ferrante and George D.Economou, eds., (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1975), p. 5.

> It is the hour of the writer who picks up popular views or phrases, or coins them, and has the power to turn them into downright stanzas. Most newspapers have one or more of these gentlemen. They could take the easy words of a statesman, such as 'No price is too high when honour and freedom are at stake', and dish them up so that the world next morning, ready to be thrilled by anything lofty and noble-looking, is thrilled.[15]

While this somewhat cynical assessment has the advantage of drawing the necessary distinction between the poetry and autobiography, it perhaps fails to make sufficient allowance for the degree of genuine emotion which the poets may have created in the course of their writing. It is possible to argue that each poem represented an emotional catharsis which produced in both reader and writer a sense of release and of satisfaction, whether in their vicarious suffering with the soldiers and the bereaved, or in their declaration of their hatred for the enemy. Its function in simultaneously generating and expressing emotion was probably a major factor in the popularity of patriotic verse, because each poem had the potential for inspiring others, in a mounting wave of patriotic sentimentalism.

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[14] "The Array of Perspectives," Ferrante and Economou, p. 53.

[15] "War Poetry," Poetry and Drama, 8 (December 1914), p. 344.

As a literary "type" made up of writing in more than one language, the Great War patriotic verse is unusual in that immediate international influence plays no part. Even in the period before the war, it is improbable, by the very nature of such poetry, that it was translated in large quantities from one language to another, although a few famous national songs crossed the language barriers. It is also unusual in that the poetry in the war shows little evidence of change and development, nor does it appear to have undergone transformation into any related type, unlike, for instance, that favourite genre of literary theorists, the Gothic novel. Rather, it seems to have sprung to life in 1914 in fully-developed form, though no doubt owing much to its various antecedents, and to have died suddenly, leaving behind almost no effect on future poetry. However, it is like several other "types" which are governed by a large number of conventions, in that its appeal is to a popular rather than to an exclusive audience, and that its very definite "aesthetic intent" is deliberately manipulative of the reader.[16]

In view of the singular lack of immediate influence from one language to another, one must assume that the explanation of common traits in Great War patriotic poetry lies in the shared cultural heritage of the countries of Western Europe, in, amongst other things, their similar sense of nationhood and of individual responsibility towards the state, their dependence on the same religion for both moral values and symbolism, and their literary inheritance emanating from the same sources, showing widespread evidence of international connections. Horace's "dulce et decorem est pro patria mori" may have been the common inspiration for the underlying patriotic and heroic attitude, but it is augmented both with the Christian ideal of martydom and with features of the pre-Christian warrior ethic, especially the belief in the hero's unique afterlife. Medieval chivalry, which was in itself an endeavour to reconcile Christianity and the older warrior tradition, in life as well as in literature, provided the patriotic war-poets with a constant source of imagery. The nineteenth century's revived interest in things medieval, especially in England and Germany, ensured that the "code" of chivalric references was understood by readers and writers alike, and that the significance of such lines as "Wir tragen den Kaiser auf ehernem Schild" and "You have lost your spurs!" which to the uninitiated may sound rather strange, was fully appreciated.[17]

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[16] The term, a translation of "Kunstwollen," is used by Wellek and Warren, (p. 233), and is listed as one of the primary distinguishing factors for a genre. Other examples of "popular" literary types with a deliberately manipulative intent are Gothic novels, detective stories and Victorian melodrama, all of which are, of course, highly conventionalised.

Such intensive adherence to conventions as one finds in the Great War poetry is less apparent in patriotic verse from the previous century. An admittedly rather cursory study of several relevant anthologies and works of criticism--amongst others, Betty T. Bennett's collection of British war poems from the age of Romanticism, M. Van Wyk Smith's Boer War poetry study, Drummer Hodge, Helene Adolf's anthology of German poetry of the period around 1870, Dem neuen Reich entgegen, and Charles Lenient's La Poésie patriotique en France dans les temps modernes (1894)--indicates, for instance, that a "we" persona is not an inevitable accompaniment of patriotism. In the work of G. A. Fauré, the French writer whose output spanned two wars, his 1870 poems consistently use a first person singular form or an impersonal voice, while those from the Great War are all spoken through a collective "nous." It is also noticeable that many poets succeeded in writing of their love for their country without a corresponding degree of hatred for an alien power (for instance, the invective is decidedly less strong in Fauré's earlier poems), that the 1914-18 war was unusual in the unanimity with which the war was welcomed, that patriotic poets of 1914 were less concerned than their predecessors with the "facts" of the war, whether political or military, and that the special vocabulary, and particularly the medieval terminology, were far less universal in that earlier poetry.

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[17] Walter Flex, "Das Volk in Eisen, " Sonne und Schild (Braunschweig: Georg Westermann, 1915), p. 9; G. K. Chesterton, "The Wife of Flanders," Elliott, p. 42.

It is hard to demonstrate the almost universal validity of the conventions governing Great War patriotic verse merely by quoting a few from amongst thousands of examples; a more convincing case can be made by discussing them in connection with the exceptions which proverbially test the rules. Since one striking feature is the prevalence of the first person plural "voice," atypical patriotic poetry may be considered as that in which the author expresses his commitment to the homeland, but through the "I" persona instead of "we." A distinction must be made between verse in which the poet identifies himself explicitly with the cause, and that which is primarily an expression of longing for home; the two types sometimes mingle, but the thought of home is often a means of escape from the reality of one's surroundings, rather than a source of patriotic determination.

The obvious inference to be drawn from the existence of patriotic verse with a "we" and an "I" persona is that, in the one case, the poet might speak on behalf of the public, while in the other he speaks only for himself. One would anticipate therefore that "I" patriotic verse would give voice to a personal and individual commitment which, to the extent that any poetry is justifiably to be regarded as autobiographical, might ~~possibly~~ be identified with the poet's own view. Many ostensibly "I" poems can be dismissed immediately because the first person singular form proves to be nothing more than a formulaic usage, such as "mein Vaterland," "je te salue," "I pray," within a "public" poem. In others, the poet may move readily from "I" to "we" and back again, as Heinrich Lersch does in "Soldaten-Abschied." However, the illusion that the soldier who pleads so movingly, "Lass mich gehen, Mutter, lass mich gehen!" may be Lersch himself is destroyed when the "I" speaker takes a fond farewell of his wife, and then of his "Liebste." Lersch's "I" persona is not to be taken as voicing the poet's personal commitment (although, of course, it may exemplify it), but is used for the aesthetic purpose of evoking sympathy, while the alternation between "I" and "we" underlines the theme of the poem, the voluntary sacrifice of the individual to the general cause.

Although the idea of giving of oneself for the collective good is not, of course, uniquely German, it is reflected in a type of poem which is more in evidence in that language than in the other two. In what might be called "oath" poems, a vow of loyalty and sacrifice which is made first through the "I" persona is then incorporated into a collective pledge. Karl Münzer's "Vaterland" is of this type, as are Walter Flex's "Preussisches Fahnenlied" and

Gerhart Hauptmann's "O mein Vaterland."[18] Where poetry is dominated by generalisations, the "I" persona has the effect of making at least one of the referents specific and, accordingly, more credible. For instance, Flex's lines "Ich habe dem König von Preussen geschworen / Einen leiblichen Eid" evoke a picture which, if not immediately transferable into the empirical world, is at least a realisable image, and it is not difficult to believe that the poet may have conceived of his own military pledge of allegiance in just such a light. The French poet Nicolas Beauduin similarly makes his vow personal through an "I" persona, although his pledge is of love towards his "divine épousée," France, rather than explicitly of service.

Patriotic declarations in the "I" form appear to be scarce in English. Recalling Sorley's observations about the German "lack of reserve and self-consciousness" relative to the English,[19] one wonders whether in England a convention--dictated, perhaps, by "reserve and self-consciousness"--forbade individuals to proclaim their patriotism in poetry without the disguise of a collective or impersonal "voice." This suggestion is born out by Rupert Brooke's "The Soldier,"[20] one of the most famous English poems of the war. The "I" persona of the first two lines sounds casual and self-effacing, in a manner uncharacteristic of patriotic verse, but quite typical of Brooke, both as poet and as person. "Think only this of me" could easily be the antecedent for a comment like Sorley's "many a better one has died before,"[21] while the nonchalant "some corner" recalls the tone of Hardy's "They throw in Drummer Hodge, to rest." After the first sentence, however, the "I" voice disappears, and with it the modest and almost conversational tone. When the person who at the beginning was "me" has become "him" or, more accurately, "it" ("dust"), there is little left to distinguish this poem, either in subject-matter or in general tone, from the totally "public" sonnet called "The Dead" which precedes it in the 1914 cycle. The change is echoed in the contrast between the definite image evoked by the words "some corner of a foreign field"--a picture of a neglected, weed-grown place which the plough never reaches--and the unrealisable generality of phrases like "her flowers to love, her ways to roam," or "Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day." The impersonal tone of most of "The Soldier," as well as its objective title, suggest that the poet is hinting his readers away from a "confessional" approach. However, because there is nothing which actually countermands the "I" of the opening, it is easy to understand why Brooke's contemporaries and many later critics read the poem as autobiography.

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[18] Münzer, Neue Kriegslieder, p. 15; Flex, Sonne und Schild, p. 3; Hauptmann, Bab, II, 4.

[19] Sorley, Letters, p. 183.

[20] Brooke, 1914 and Other Poems (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1915), p. 15.

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[21] "When you see millions of the mouthless dead," Marlborough, p. 78.

Edward Thomas uses a first person singular "voice" in "This is No Case of Petty Right or Wrong" for a purpose apparently similar to that of the German "oath" poets, that is, for a personal declaration of love for the homeland.[22] However, instead of making through the "I" persona an individual pledge which represents a minute part of the general commitment, Thomas uses it to deny the validity of a love in which all are expected to join. He deliberately refutes automatic and extremist patriotism, and declines to take a judgmental position. Yet, having established his individual and unbiased viewpoint, he retreats to a patriotic commitment made entirely through a "we" voice, with several features characteristic of patriotic verse. The linking of the name of God with that of England, the personification of the country as "she"--a move which, paradoxically, has the effect of converting the physical entity into a concept--and such "poetic" vocabulary as "perchance" and "ken" are not commonly found in Thomas' poetry. One must agree with Silkin's comment, referring specifically to the line "The ages made her that made us from dust," that, in this poem, Thomas inclines, "however slightly," towards "the rhetorical position that any patriotism, no matter how moderately expressed, tends to lead one into."[23]

A more consistently unusual patriotic poem is Arnold

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[22] Thomas, Collected Poems, p. 168.
[23] Out of Battle, p. 88.

Ulitz's "Belagerung."[24] For Ulitz the "Vaterland" is neither an idea called Germany nor, in a general sense, a territory bearing that name, but his home town. The threat from the enemy is, before everything, to the physical structure of the town, and it is streets and buildings which serve as the focal point for Ulitz's love. Only through contact with the physical objects which are soon to be destroyed can his love find its completion:

> Ich will heut Nacht in deine stillste Strasse laufen
> Und meine Stirn auf deine festen Steine legen
> Und will den Staub des Tags mit meinen Händen fegen
> Und Erdenkörner will ich aus deinen Fugen raufen.

He proposes to relive his childhood discovery of the town, not through its "sights and sounds" (to quote Brooke), but through the most intimate of the senses, the tactile:

> Wenn wir umkreist sind, will ich noch einmal wildern
> Durch alle meine Lieblingsstrassen wie als Kind,
> Will buchstabieren an funkelnden Ladenschildern,
> Und auf die Strassenbahnschienen will ich die Hände
> legen
> Und spüren, wie sie warm von der Sonne sind.

By comparison, the experiences which Brooke enumerates as contributing to the "awareness" of his soldier, to whom England "Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam," and who had been "Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home," are seen to be far too general to belong to any individual "I."

Ulitz's poem is atypical of patriotic verse in several ways besides its consistent first person singular persona and its preference for the specific over the general and abstract. The introduction of "non-poetic" words like "Strassenbahnschienen" and "Ladenschildern" is complemented by a dearth of "high-sounding phrases"; there is also a lack of invective against the enemy, and no extremist patriotic viewpoint. The opening lines present the war situation simply:

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[24] Volkmann, p. 103.

> Russische Reiter jagen durch unser Land.
> Dőrfer, die ich liebe, sind alle verbrannt.

"Unser," the only instance of the collective pronoun in the whole poem ("wir" in the third stanza means "the town and I"), places the "we-they" dichotomy of war, but otherwise the two lines are a non-condemnatory statement of the fact that, since war is, destruction is inevitable. Equally out of character, at least for German patriotic poetry, is the ending, for instead of the usual "Sieg oder Tod!" type of "war-cry," one finds in the last lines a ready acceptance of both death and defeat, a reaction which is much more typically French:

> Und wenn sie dich treffen ins Herz, und wenn du fällst,
> Du meine Stadt, dann will ich mit dir fallen, Leib an Leib!

Ulitz's town is personified, not as a symbolic figure like Thomas' "an England beautiful" rising from the witches' cauldron of war, but as a physical entity capable of being destroyed "Glied um Glied." In some respects, especially in its concentration on the physical and specific, "Belagerung" is more like Thomas than Thomas' own patriotic declaration--although the English poet would certainly have minimised the almost aggressively self-centred "I" persona and made the total effect less flagrantly dramatic. Even so, when Ulitz says

> Mein Häuflein Erde in der Hand,
> Küssen will ich's und sagen: Vaterland!"

one is reminded of an incident reported by Eleanor Farjeon concerning Thomas, which both Silkin and E. D. Blodgett consider central to the understanding of his poetry.[25] When, after he had volunteered for the army, Thomas was asked if he knew what he was fighting for, he picked up "a pinch of earth" and replied, "Literally, for this."

It is interesting to note that many Belgian poets reveal an attitude towards their country similar to that of Ulitz and Thomas, and markedly in contrast with their French counterparts writing in the same language. The distinction is particularly clear in poems concerned with physical destruction. The poets of France itself appear to be primarily intent on demonstrating the wickedness of the Germans and on emphasising their own country's role as the innocent victim, as well as their right to seek revenge. Accordingly, the uniqueness of any location which has suffered damage is important only in its potential for generating cries of outrage--Rheims cathedral, for instance. For the Belgians the propaganda aspect is decidedly secondary to their concern for the loss of the special material object and the centuries of human culture which it represents. Interest is focused on a specific town or building, of which the writer is aware of both the former and the present state, but the temptation to hyperbole in making the contrast is resisted to a remarkably large extent. One example from many in Marcel Wyseur's La Flandre rouge is "Les Mortes," where the poet, writing in London, asks,

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[25] Out of Battle, pp. 87-88; "A Mouthful of Earth: A Word for Edward Thomas," Modern Poetry Studies 3 (1972), 159.

> Où sont vos toits penchés comme d'anciens visages,
> Et l'exquise douceur des calmes béguinages,
> Dixmude, Ypres, Nieuport, où sont vos lourds beffrois,
>
> Vos cloches qui chantaient les chansons d'autrefois?

The implication is that they are in ruins, but the tone at the end is of sadness rather than of outrage:

> La Mère Flandre pleure, et les bises sauvages
> M'ont apporté ce soir quels râles dans leurs
> voix?...[26]

When a French poet, Alfred Droin, writes on a similar theme, even his title, "Le Carnage," suggests that his aim is to incite anti-German feeling rather than to express a sense of loss. As one might expect, his village which "riait, calme," in the early morning is nothing but "un braisier rouge et noir" by evening, after its encounter with "les reitres."[27] However, Droin's nameless village, where, he would have one believe, "le bonheur habitait la plus humble chaumière," never seems to be more than a literary device or cliché, reminiscent of Samuel Rogers' bucolic "cot beside the hill."

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[26] La Flandre rouge (Paris: Perrin, 1916), p. 152.

[27] Le Crêpe étoilé: 1914-1917 (Paris: Charpentier, 1917), pp. 13-14.

The contrast between the generalities employed in the patriotic French writing and the attention to concrete detail in the Belgian is especially striking. In a typical manner, Henri de Regnier's France swears vengeance "Par mes champs dévastés, par mes villes en flammes,"[28] and one rarely finds anything more particularising than the mention of a place-name in comparable poems. By contrast, A. Marcel's "Mai 1915," concerning the destruction of Ypres, has all the life, colour and detail of a Flemish painting. It describes how "tous les anciens d'Ypres,"

> Nous les drapeurs pour qui l'on construit les Halles,
> Nous les maçons qui bâtissions les cathédrales,

and many others, come forward in their "voiles, pourpoints, guenilles, / Robes sombres, costumes colorés, / Bure velours soie et casques dorés," to insist that, although their work is being destroyed, the spirit of Ypres will remain.[29] One can draw a parallel between the generalised writing of the French and the poetry of courtly love, where the poet rarely described his lady in anything other than unspecific, cliché-like terms; in both cases, the concern of the writer may be said to have been with his own emotions rather than with the person (or personification) about whom he was supposedly writing. The Belgian writers, on the other hand, used their poetry in much the same way as Wilfrid Owen was to use his, by letting "the pity of war" speak for itself, and, like Owen, they apparently found a need to escape from abstractions.

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[28] 1914-1916, p. 32.

[29] Gaston Bernard et Victor Buissonville, eds., Poètes-soldats: Recueil de poèmes du front Belge (Paris: Jouve, 1917), p. 86.

There is in the Belgian poetry a particularly strong sense of historical continuity as evinced by buildings. For instance, in "La Cathédrale de Reims" Verhaeren writes of "la pierre / Creusée immensément et pénétrée / Par mille ans de beauté et mille ans de prière," and Wyseur's "La Tour des Templiers" tells how the tower at Nieuport has cast its shadow on the town "Depuis des jours sans fin, depuis des jours sans nombre, / Et puis des jours encor [sic]."[30] One looks in vain for a similar historical sense in the French writing, or indeed in the patriotic verse in the other two languages. The only possible comparison is with English poems concerning the continuity of rural life, like Hardy's "In Time of 'The Breaking of Nations'," Kipling's "The Land" (although it is probably incorrent to call the latter a "war-poem," since its only connection with the war is the date which the narrator mentions, "Georgii Quinti Anno Sexto"), and, on a theme similar to Kipling's, Edward Thomas' "Lob," which reveals a much more subtle awareness of the interplay of change and continuity. Fussell writes that "the Great War was perhaps the last to be conceived as taking place within a seamless, purposeful 'history' involving a coherent stream of time running from past through present to future."[31] His observation may be true in general, but as far as the patriotic verse is concerned the "stream" metaphor, with its implication of progression and, therefore, of alteration, is inaccurate. Rather, the typical patriotic poet gives little indication of any historical awareness, other than the belief that present and past are directly comparable. By contrast, the idea which finds expression in the Belgian poetry, that, although life will continue, an important link with the past has been irretrievably destroyed, shows a much more rational acceptance of the facts, and, accordingly, a readiness to deal with them.

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[30] Verhaeren, Les Ailes rouges de la guerre (Paris: Mercure de France, 1919), p. 38; Wyseur, La Flandre rouge, p. 130.

The apparent inability of most of the other patriotic poets to appreciate the difference between past and present results in part from their persistent choice of imagery which makes no allowance for a recognition of change, and of a style of writing which tempts them towards a traditional approach, but it also reflects a traditionalist and conservative outlook. John Masters, in his illustrated history of the war,. Fourteen Eighteen, distinguishes between the attitude produced by a (somewhat idealised) pre-war Britain, with a social structure based on "the centuries-old, slow-matured trust between the classes," where "to question was to doubt, and to doubt was to undermine this basic strength," and the sort of outlook necessary for the effective conduct of this war, "the mind that will not accept, which prods and probes into the very roots of action and motivation and has no reverence."[32] Patriotic verse, with its assumption that the standards of the past are entirely appropriate for the present, its unquestioning acceptance of the clichés of heroism and honour, and its pretence at dealing with contemporary affairs, while avoiding any precise association between words and reality, was obviously a suitable vehicle only for poets who were prepared to remain blinkered in this way. There were a few, however--increasing in number as the war followed its terrible course--who recognised the danger in assuming that the grandiloquent phrases and high-sounding concepts of a literary convention can be transferred directly into the real world, and who were prepared to challenge the popular and established viewpoint.

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[31] Fussell, p. 21.

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[32] Fourteen Eighteen (London: Michael Joseph, 1965), p. 87.

V. Protest against the Patriotic Myth

Behind all the poetry which protests against the war is undoubtedly a "mind which will not accept," and which "has no reverence" for the cliches of the patriotic-heroic myth. Having observed, and sometimes participated in, the widespread mood of excitement in August 1914, the poets recognised the supreme importance of uncovering the weaknesses inherent in the traditional patriotic and heroic viewpoint. With only a few exceptions, writers whose poetry was directed towards protesting their country's involvement were not pacifists as such, and many were on active service. At least two of the well-known English war-poets recognised the anomaly between their anti-war sentiments and the fact that they had volunteered to fight. Wilfred Owen wondered whether he was not "a conscientious objector with a very seared conscience,"[2] and Charles Sorley admitted that volunteering because of the "cartwheels of public opinion" was "a refinement of cowardice."[3] However, in their poetry the attack is directed, not so much against war *per se*, as against the "sentimental" attitude towards it (the term is

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[2] *Collected Letters*, ed. Harold Owen and John Bell (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), p. 461.

[3] Sorley, *Letters*, p. 241.

Sorley's[3]), and this approach is characteristic of the protest poetry in general. The attack is made with words, and to a very large extent the target, too, is words, "les grands mots, les mots doctes, les nobles mots, les mots sonores," or "Worte, berauschende Worte," which convinced people that participation in the war was a virtue.[4] This is indeed, to adopt Fussell's phrase, "a literary war," for the one type of "public" poetry sets out deliberately to deny the validity of the other.

Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est" shows particularly clearly the direction of the protest.[5] His description of weary soldiers, "Bent double, like old beggars under sacks," and of the horrible death of a man caught in a gas attack, "the white eyes writhing in his face" and blood "gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs," could have stood as a condemnation of war itself, or of the new marriage of warfare with science. Instead, the poem is directed against those people who, failing to comprehend what dying in battle can be like, persist in repeating "To children ardent for some desperate glory," the "old Lie" that death for the fatherland is "dulce et decorum." In an earlier draft, the poem was addressed "To a Certain Poetess."[6] A.G. West writes an even more direct attack on fellow-poets:

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[3] Ibid., p. 263. He writes that Brooke, in the _1914_ sonnets, "has clothed his attitude in fine words, but he has taken the sentimental attitude."

[4] Martinet, "Civils," _Temps_ _maudits_, p. 123; E. G. Kolbenheyer, "Chronica 1915," _Lyrisches_ _Brevier_ (München: Georg Müller, 1929), p. 133.

[5] _Collected_ _Poems_, p. 55.

[6] Ibid., footnote, p. 55.

> God, how I hate you, you young cheerful men
> Whose pious poetry blossoms on your graves
> As soon as you are in them...
> Hark how one chants--
> "Oh, happy to have lived these epic days"--
> "These epic days" And he'd been to France
> And seen the trenches, glimpsed the huddled dead
> In the periscope, hung on the rusty wire,
> Choked by their sickly foetor, day and night
> Blown down his throat;[7]

Alfred Lichtenstein's critique of war poetry in "Abschied" is milder and less blatant, but its irony is effective.[8] Each of the five short stanzas consists of a line which represents a not-very-successful poet's attempt to write in the heroic manner, and a second where the illusion is destroyed by a bathetic "aside." For instance, noble and stoical acceptance of the prospect of death, "Wir ziehn zum Krieg. Der Tod ist unser Kitt," is tempered by "O, heulte mir doch die Geliebte mit." The self-image presented in the first line of the poem, the soldier-poet engaged in his last literary effort,--"Vorm Sterben mache ich noch mein Gedicht"--gives way finally (after a traditional heroic sunset--"Am Himmel brennt das brave Abendrot"), to his fearful acknowledgment that death may really be imminent--"Vielleicht bin ich in dreizehn Tagen tot."

Poets and other writers are a favourite target, too, for Marcel Martinet. In "Poètes d'Allemagne, ô frères inconnus," he condemns the old and famous writers, French and German, "Dans leurs bons fauteuils dorés, / Bélliqueux et satisfaits," who dismiss young protest poets of the two countries as "Traîtres à la cause sacrée," even though the latter are writing from the trenches.[9] In "Civils" his reproach is for the various civilians who use words to send soldiers to their death:

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[7] "God, How I Hate You," Ian Parsons, ed., Men Who March Away (Toronto: Clarke Irwin, 1966), p. 84.

[8] Gedichte und Geschichten (Munchen: Georg Muller, 1919), p. 103.

> Vous qui luttez si bien, la plume en main,
> Héros cachés, cachés derrière ceux qui meurent,
> Derrière ceux que vous jetez à la mort.[10]

One of those "poètes inconnus d'Allemagne," Richard Fischer, takes up a stock phrase in the same way as Owen, and demands a reassessment of its significance:

> "Auf dem Felde der Ehre gefallen."--
> Wie lange sollen und wollen wir noch, von allen
> Leidend errungnen Menschheitsjahrtausendgedanken
> verlassen
> Wie schwachsinnige Greise solche Worte lügen und
> lallen-
>
> "Auf dem Felde der Ehre!"--Diese Schädelstätte von
> Mord,
> Gepflügt und gepflegt von geldstinkenden Handen und
> Lügenwort?[11]

Since the whole protest movement (if such it may be called) may be regarded as an attempt to give the lie to whatever the myth of patriotism and heroism takes for granted, it is not surprising that *Lüge*, or its counterpart in the other languages, is a key word in protest poetry, in much the same way that "honour" is central to patriotic verse. Franz Werfel, with a cosmic perspective typical of early Expressionism, depicts the present time as a warrior riding into the nightmare of war, his accoutrements the empty values of the heroic myth:

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[9] Martinet, p. 74, p. 75.
[10] Ibid., p. 123.
[11] *Schrei in die Welt*, p. 11.

> Auf einem Sturm von falschen Worten,
> Umkränzt von leerem Donner das Haupt,
> Schlaflos vor Lüge,
> Mit Taten, die sich selbst nur tun, gegurtet,
> Prahlend von Opfern,
>
> . . .
>
> So fährst du hin,
> Zeit,
> In den lärmended Traum,
> Den Gott mit schrecklichen Händen
> Aus seinem Schlaf reisst
> Und verwirft.[12]

E. G. Kolbenheyer, in "Chronica 1915," (called "Leviathan" in some editions of his poems), explains how the lies achieved their effect, washing out any trace of conscience and "Menschheitsglaube" in "ein Schwall von Rede und Schrift," and soothing away fear with

> Lieder, gläubige Lieder,
> Die das Herz bedecken wie eine Mutterhand,
> Schirmend vor Furcht und Tod.[13]

Kolbenheyer's bloodthirsty monster, war, insists that it should be called only by such names as "Menschentum. Freiheit. Recht," and its crest bears in large letters the words "Ich will den Frieden." The poem ends, as it begins, "Wirst du erwachen, Menschheit, an der Lüge?" Robert de Souza's "L'Heure nous tient," dated December 1914, shows the disillusionment which comes from such an awakening:

> L'espérance nous emportait
> Comme une brise pousse des flammes.
> "La guerre est gloire," disait l'ancêtre,

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[12] "Krieg," *Einander*, p. 47.
[13] *Lyrisches Brevier*, pp. 132-33.

> "En sacrifice pour la justice"...
> Et toute la brise est tombée,
> Toute la jeunesse est là qui gît.
> La guerre n'est que deuil et que boue.[14]

By the end of the war, disillusionment had become, as Kipling observed, "common form," at least on the part of combatants:

> If any ask you why we died,
> Tell them, because our fathers lied.[15]

There are many variations on the basic theme of proving the tenets of heroism and patriotism to be false. For the patriotic poets who write of soldiers going to war singing, one finds others stressing their silent misery; for instance, in H. d'A. B.'s "The March," "The khaki column trudges on" in the rain, "silent o'er the long, long track," and Ernst Toller's ironically-named "Marschlied" tells how "Wir Waisen der Erde / Ziehn stumm in die Schlacht."[16] Oskar Kanehl's soldiers still sing, but "Aus müden Mündern" and

> Nur um den Takt.
> Kein Mensch freut oder ärgert sich
> über den lieben Gott oder das Vaterland,
> von dem sein Sang singsangt.[17]

Also subject to attack is the disparity between the supposed honour of being wounded in the cause of the country, and the actual situation of men whom the war has maimed. Georges

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[14] Robert de la Vaissière, ed., *Anthologie poétique du XXe siècle* (Paris: Crès, 1923), II, 155.

[15] "Common Form," *Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Definitive Edition* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1940), p. 390.

[16] "The March," *Soldier Poets*, p. 15; Toller, *Vormorgen* (Potsdam: Kiepenheuer, 1924), p. 10.

[17] Kanehl, "Auf dem Marsch," *Die Schande*, Die Aktionslyrik, 7 (Berlin-Wilmersdorf: *Die Aktion*, 1922), p. 16.

Pioch descibes them as "ignores et mépris," and

> ...si las d'être glorieux,
> Ils comdamnent, par la tristesse de leurs yeux,
> L'excès d'une grandeur qui ne sert point la vie,[18]

while Siegfried Sassoon, in the persona of an unfeeling observer, asks

> Does it matter?--losing your sight?..
> There's such splendid work for the blind,
> And people will always be kind.[19]

Those poems which assume the bravery of the men of the fatherland are countered by the many references to fear, such as Herbert Read's "happy warrior" (the phrase is from Wordsworth), whose "wild heart beats with painful sobs," and Hermann Plagge's description of men under fire:

> Die Augen um mich her sind lauernd in Angst und
> geduckt wie gepeitschte Hunde.
> O nicht sterben.[20]

Alfred Lichtenstein's "Gebet vor der Schlacht" could easily be a reply to the sort of poem in which the speaker prays for courage, like W. N. Hodgson's "Before Action," with its final plea, "Help me to die, O Lord."[21] In Lichtenstein's version, to be sung "inbrünstig" by "die Mannschaft, jeder für sich," the prayer has a different purpose:

> Sieh, ich bete gut und gerne
> Täglich sieben Rosenkränze,
> Wenn du, Gott, in deiner Gnade

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[18] Pioch, "Les Mutilés," Les Victimes (Paris: Ollendorff, [1917]), p. 9.

[19] "Does It Matter?" The War Poems of Siegfried Sassoon (London: Heinemann, 1919), p. 59.

[20] Read, "The Happy Warrior," Naked Warriors (London: Art and Letters, 1919), p. 26; Plagge, "Nacht im Granatenfeuer," Pfemfert, p. 96.

[21] Verse and Prose in Peace and War (London: Smith, Elder, 1916), p. 38.

> Meinen Freund, den Huber oder
> Meier tötest, mich verschonst.[22]

A similar displacement of high ideals by pragmatism, reminiscent of Grimmelshausen's novel of the Thirty Year's War, Simplizius Simplicissimus, occurs in Otfried Krzyzanowski's "Lied der Helden," where the hero's traditional sources of inspiration have been replaced by a much more mundane one: "Wir müssen siegen. Dann haben wir im Frieden mehr zu essen!"[23]

To counteract the "sentimental" attitude towards war in general, protest poets insist upon its inevitable relationship with death. Erwin Piscator reminds the mother of a soldier how her son learned to play the game of war, the game which has now become reality:

> War dein Knab, als er noch kleine
> Spielte mit den Bleisoldaten,
> Hatten alle scharf geladen,
> Starben alle: plumps und stumm.[24]

The "men who march away" in Hardy's famous poem ("In our heart of hearts believing / Victory crowns the just"[25]), are almost parodied by those in Sorley's "All the Hills and Vales Along"--"And the singers are the chaps /Who are going to die, perhaps."[26] E. A. Mackintosh, in "Recruiting," provides a corrected version of a recruiting poster slogan which announces "Lads, you're wanted, go and help;" after condemning "fat civilians," "girls with feathers," and "Washy verse on England's need," he suggests that the poster should read, "Go and help to swell the names / In the casualty lists," or "Lads, you're wanted. Come and die."[27] It is interesting to note that neither Sorley not Mackintosh actually condemns the killing. The "message" of "Recruiting" is that "To live and die with honest men" in the war is preferable to enduring hypocrisy and dishonesty at home. Sorley's "strangely ambivalent poem" (so I. M. Parsons describes it[28]) celebrates the joyful singing of the departing men as their swan-song; this, rather than their "heroic" death, is their final moment of greatness, and the impression which they will leave behind:

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[22] Lichtenstein, Gedichte, p. 106.

[23] Krzyzanowski, Unser täglich Gift, Der jüngste Tag, 67 (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff, [1919]), p. 22.

[24] "Denk an seine Bleisoldaten," Pfemfert, p. 90.

[25] "Men who March Away, " Satires, pp. 229-30.

[26] Marlborough, p. 72.

> All the music of their going,
> Ringing swinging glad song-throwing,
> Earth will echo still, when foot
> Lies numb and voice mute.

Their gladness as a prelude to death matches the joy with which earth plots to add to its own store of dead. It is obvious that, in such a scheme of things, the hero's traditional immortality is irrelevant.

Several of Sorley's poems explore the significance of death, and he is convinced, as Bergonzi says, of its "absolute 'otherness'."[29] of the lack of any rapport between the dead and the living, or even between the past and the present of those who have died, for whom "a big blot has hid each yesterday." In his last poem, "When you see millions of the mouthless dead," he strips away one by one the consolatory devices which the living find in the myth of heroic death:

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[27] "Recruiting," Gardner, pp. 111-12.
[28] Parsons, p. 18.
[29] Bergonzi, p. 57.

> Say not soft things as other men have said,
> That you'll remember. For you need not so.
> Give them not praise. For deaf, how should they know
> It is not curses heaped on each gashed head?
> Nor tears. Their blind eyes see not your tears flow.
> Nor honour. It is easy to be dead.
> Say only this, "They are dead." Then add thereto,
> "Yet many a better one has died before."[30]

From Sorley's recognition that "it is easy to be dead," to the attitude towards death in English poetry of the Second World War, with its "laconic refusal to reach out to any myth," is a direct path.[31] In this sense Sorley appears far more modern than MacKintosh, who merely replaces one myth with another, or even Owen, whose awareness of "the eternal reciprocity of tears" suggests that the death of others must always retain some meaning for the living, even if, as in "Anthem for Doomed Youth," traditional religious symbol and ritual are transmuted into elements more appropriate for "these who die as cattle."[32]

Like Sorley, Marc Larreguy de Civrieux in "Debout les Morts" emphasises the point that veneration of dead heroes means nothing to those who died.[33] Rejecting the heroic-patriotic mode which his title represents, he pleads that the dead have already played their part, and, since they have done nothing to deserve the punishment of being hunted from their "funèbre asile," they should be allowed to rest in peace. However, the form of their "sleeping" is not, as one might expect, the immortality of the soul, but the "néant éternel et miséricordieux" of the decaying body. In Bertholt Brecht's "Legende vom toten Soldaten," which designs to prove how easily society can be manipulated in the name of heroism, the corpse of a soldier is "resurrected" on the order of the Kaiser and carried through the streets, a ridiculous symbol of all "the Fallen" who are made an object of reverence by the living.[34]

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[30] *Marlborough*, p. 78. J. M. Gregson in *Poetry of the First World War* (London: Edward Arnold, 1976) suggests that "other men" is "probably a direct reference to Brooke" (p. 28), but the reference could as easily be to the line "We will remember them," in Binyon's "For the Fallen."

[31] Fussell, p. 57.

[32] *Collected Poems*, p. 44.

[33] *Poètes contre*, p. 83.

Other poets, like Brecht, make clear the distinction between the physical body and the spiritual qualities with which society endows the "noble Dead." Wilhelm Stolzenburg describes quite unemotionally the postures and expressions of various corpses:

> Viele warten (die man nur vergass!)
> auf Signale, die sie rufen sollen...
> . . .
> Manche sind verwundert, dass die fielen,
> solch ein Staunen ist in ihren Mienen.[35]

The only spiritual attributes of these "Gefallene" (as the poem is called) are those which the observer postulates from their physical appearance, as if they were still alive. The speaker in Sassoon's "I stood with the Dead" gazes "On the shapes of the slain in their crumpled disgrace," hoping in vain for consolation; he is forced to acknowledge that "the Dead" are simply, and totally, "dead," and turns back to the business of living.[36]

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[34] Bertolt Brechts Hauspostille (Berlin: Propyläen-Verlag, 1927), pp. 125-130.

[35] "Gefallene," Pfemfert, p. 108.

Since unidentified corpses provide a useful contrast to glorious death and immortal fame, any poem concerned chiefly with physical remains has, by its very nature, the potential of implicit protest. It is possibly for this reason that Heinrich Lersch's "Brüder" finds its way (in translation) into Bertram Lloyd's protest anthology, The Paths of Glory, although no doubt the possible international interpretation of "ein fremder Kamerad" also appealed to Lloyd.[37] H. F. Constantine leaves no doubt that "The Glory of War" is a poem of protest:

> My sergeant major's dead, killed as we entered the
> village;
> You will not find his body, tho' you look for it;
> A shell burst on him, leaving his legs, strangely
> enough, untouched.
> Happy man, he died for England."[38]

René Arcos, like Lersch, shows that death makes all men equal, but his approach is unquestionably international:

> Serrés les uns contre les autres,
> Les morts sans haine et sans drapeau,
> Cheveux plaqués de sang caillé,
> Les morts sont tous d'un seul côté.[39]

Ernst Toller, too, uses corpses to prove that death renders futile the conflict between nations:

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[36] War Poems, p. 38.

[37] Lersch, "Brüder," Herz! Aufglühe dein Blut (Jena: Diederichs, 1918), p. 101; trans. Lloyd, Paths, p. 73.

[38] Lloyd, Paths, p. 39.

[39] "Les Morts," Le Sang des autres (Genève: Le Sablier, 1919), p. 26.

> O Frauen Frankreichs,
> Frauen Deutschlands,
> Säht Ihr Eure Männer.
> Sie tasten mit zerfetzten Händen
> Nach den verquollnen Leibern ihrer Feinde;
> Gebärde, leichenstarr, ward brüderlicher Hauch,
> Ja, sie umarmen sich.[40]

At the same time, his description of the "Düngerhaufen faulender Menschenleiber" seems designed to present to the women of the two countries the shocking and totally alien picture of rotting corpses.

The effect which the inescapable presence of corpses, often dismembered and sometimes in large numbers, may have on the living, is an important part of the protest. Owen's "mental cases" are "Men whose minds the dead have ravished;" Toller tells of the thoughts of one of his comrades:

> Einer träumt am Massengrab
> "Solchen Haufen Weihnachtskuchen
> Wünscht ich mir als Kind,
> Soviel"...[41]

Ivor Gurney also juxtaposes past and present, with similarly horrifying effect, in "To His Love."[42] This seems to be a simple and gentle lament for the death of a friend (to whose "love" the poem is addressed) and for lost "pastoral" days "On Cotswold / Where the sheep feed." Only at the end does one appreciate the poem's many complexities, amongst them the fact that the poet's real concern is with neither past nor present, but with the future:

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[40] "Leichen im Priesterwald," Vormorgen, p. 17.

[41] Owen, "Mental Cases," Collected Poems, p. 69; Toller, "Gang zur Ruhestellung," Vormorgen, p. 14.

[42] Gurney, Poems, p. 42.

You would not know him now...
But still he died
Nobly, so cover him over
With violets of pride
Purple from Severn side.

Cover him, cover him soon!
And with thick-set
Masses of memoried flowers--
Hide that red wet
Thing I must somehow forget.

Gurney distinguishes not only between the dead and the living, but also between the two groups of survivors, those for whom "violets of pride" and the thought of noble death provide adequate consolation, and those for whom such means are, at best, a desperate recourse in the attempt to live with the experiences of the war. When "the Fallen" have become hideous objects, "wobbling carrion roped upon a cart," or "über die Brustwehr geworfen wie Ballast aus einem Schiff," a pledge like Binyon's "We will remember them!" can be no longer appropriate.[43]

While patriotic verse does not completely ignore the fact that "the brave" may die, it rarely acknowledges that they also kill, preferring, one must assume, the belief that enemy soldiers succumb to an impersonal "Death" or have somehow become "dead." (In German patriotic poems one finds by the hundreds "der Tod," "der Tote," "tot," and even "getötet," but rarely the active form, "töten.") Many protest poets, therefore, take up the conscientious objector's cry that the main purpose of war is slaughter. In "Tu vas te battre" Marcel Martinet reminds the workers that their task will be to kill men like themselves:

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[43] Richard Aldington, "Soliloquy I," Images of War (Boston: Four Seas, 1921), p. 39; Hermann Plagge, "Die Schlacht," Pfemfert, p. 97; Binyon, "For the Fallen," The Four Years, p. 43.

> Mineur de Saxe, devant toi
> Il y a un mineur de Lens,
> Tue-le.
> Docker du Havre, devant toi
> Il y a un docker de Brème,
> Tue et tue, tue-le, tuez-vous,
> Travaille, travailleur.[44]

Edlef Koppen's ultimate daydream, "diesen schwarzsamtnen, singenden Traum," is "Einen Tag lang nicht töten."[45] Karl Stamm's "Soldat vor dem Gekreuzigten" sees, scratched on the face of his enemy, the words, "Mord, Mord," and knows that he will never escape from that knowledge.[46] Siegfried Sassoon in "Remorse" deals explicitly with the failure of the myth to allow for the reality of killing:

> "Could anything be worse than this?"--he wonders,
> Remembering how he saw those Germans run,
> Screaming for mercy among the stumps of trees:
> . . .
> Our chaps were sticking 'em like pigs...."O hell!"
> He thought--"there's things in war one dare not tell
> Poor father sitting safe at home, who reads
> Of dying heroes and their deathless deeds."[47]

Another limitation which Sassoon finds in the myth is its refusal to admit that all men do not die like heroes. He calls one of his sardonic poems, "How to Die." The first stanza presents the myth--dawn, and

> The dying hero shifts his head
> To watch the glory that returns,

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[44] Martinet, p. 59.

[45] Pfemfert, p. 81.

[46] Stamm, Der Aufbruch des Herzens (Zürich: Rascher, 1920), p. 40.

[47] War Poems, p. 44.

. . .
Radiance reflected in his eyes,
And on his lips a whispered name.

The speaker continues:

You'd think, to hear some people talk,
That lads go West with sobs and curses,
And sullen faces white as chalk,

but in fact, he assures us, "they've been taught the way to do it / Like Christian soldiers," "with due regard for decent taste."[48] Such a direct confrontation between unheroic death and the myth is found not uncommonly (but, strangely enough, mainly in the English poetry). For example, in "The Everlasting Terror," a poem printed on the back of a concert-programme for a performance at an army barracks in England in November 1916, the author tells how he has

heard the screams of men
In suffering beyond our ken,
And shuddered at the thought that I
Might scream as well if I should die.[49]

The echo of Brooke's famous "If I should die, think only this of me," in the last line may be unintentional (although the title, a parody of Masefield's "The Everlasting Mercy," indicates awareness of contemporary literature), but it certainly serves as a measure for the reality of 1916 against the expectation of 1914. In Robert Graves' "The Leveller," the linking of truth and myth is quite deliberate.[50] The poem describes the death of two men, of whom the one, "a cut-throat wild,/ Groaned 'Mother! Mother!' like a child," while the other, young and pale and "not too bold," "Died cursing God with cruel oaths." Their sergeant wrote to the "womenfolk" of both, "He died a hero's death." The "hero" of Owen's "S.I.W." is a young man who shot himself to escape from the terror of the war, and the poem ends,

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[48] Ibid., p. 51.

[49] J. R. A., "The Everlasting Terror," Imperial War Museum.

> With him they buried the muzzle his teeth had kissed,
> And truthfully wrote the Mother, "Tim died smiling."[51]

While the death of the son in Piscator's "Denk an seine Bleisoldaten" is less blatantly antiheroic, it is far from the splendid finale implied in the message the mother receives:

> Musst nun weinen, Mutter, weine--
> Wenn du's liesest: "Starb als Held."
> Denk an seine Bleisoldaten...
> Hatten alle scharf geladen...
> Starben alle: plumps und stumm.[52]

Death after the manner of the soldiers in Piscator's poem, that is, in large numbers and without a struggle, is characteristic of this war of mass-destruction. Max Plowman describes the scene of just such an apparently futile, and certainly unheroic, incidence of mass death, in "The Dead Soldiers:"

> Just as the scythe had caught them, there they lay,
> A sheaf for Death, ungarnered and untied:
> A crescent moon of men who showed the way

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[50] Country Sentiment (London: Martin Secker, 1920), p. 76.

[51] Collected Poems, p. 74.

[52] Pfemfert, p. 90.

> When first the Tanks crept out, till they too died:
> Guardsmen, I think, but one can hardly tell. . . .[53]

Henry-Jacques, hoping to throw light on the phrase, "Mourir, c'est le sort le plus beau," recounts an incident of the death of twenty men carrying explosives:

> Il ne reste rien d'eux qu'en débris mélangés
> Des parcelles de chair et des bouts de capote."[54]

The many poems about large numbers of unidentified corpses, like Stolzenberg's "Gefallene" or Toller's "Leichen im Priesterwald," also serve to emphasise that the death of individuals may no longer be regarded as significant enough for heroism.

In the face of the probability of such an inescapable and meaningless death, the soldier's role is seen, not as that of a hero about to engage in battle, but as that of an animal destined for slaughter. Richard Fischer's "Feld der Ehre" implies that heroism is possible only where one can choose one's course of action:

> "Ehre"--Willenlos werden wir hingeschleppt,
> Eine stumpfe, todesangstschwitzende Herde."[55]

But for "these poor sheep, driven innocent to death," the power to make decisions has been taken away, and they have become entirely passive,

> Parqués dans les frontières,
> numérotés,
> marqués du signe de la bête,
> comme des moutons.[56]

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[53] Gardner, p. 103.

[54] "Les Martyrs," Nous... p. 83.

[55] Schrei, p. 11.

[56] Max Plowman, "Going into the Line," Gardner, p. 102; Joseph Billiet, "Terre," Poètes contre, p. 39.

Even the act of killing, the soldiers' ultimate deed, is presented as something they undertake against their will:

> Sie haben ein Tuch zwischen uns gehängt,
> Mein Bruder,
> Durch das unsre Degen nach unsern Herzen bohren.[57]

The active voice is reserved for those responsible for their suffering--God, who "made the Law that men should die in meadows," Sassoon's Major and his like, who "speed glum heroes up the line to death," and the "ravageurs du monde," of whom Vildrac writes that

> Ils nous ont pris, toi, moi, nous tous,
> Hommes parqués, *matériel humain*,
> Comme on prendrait la menue-paille
> Pour nourrir un feu,
> Prodiguant les poignées après les poignées."[58]

Not all the victims are soldiers. One of Alec Waugh's "fragmentary visions" of the "heart of war" is of

> A young girl born for laughter and Spring,
> Left to her shame and her loneliness,

for, he adds,

> What is one woman more or less
> To men who've forgotten everything.[59]

Erwin Piscator, in "Der Mutter zweier Söhne, welche fielen," imagines the woman's gradual withdrawal into death; like her sons, she is at the mercy of the "powers-that-be," the only difference being that her death is slow--"Dich aber mordet man ganz langsam."[60] The old man in Martinet's "Celui-là...," whose son has died of wounds, makes explicit the difference between victims and the alien "they" who cause their suffering:

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[57] Walther G. Hartmann, "Mein Bruder Feind!" *Wir Menschen*, Der jüngste Tag, 79 (München: Kurt Wolff, 1920), p. 19.

[58] Leslie Coulson, "Who Made the Law?" *From an Outpost* (London: Erskine Macdonald, 1917), p. 9; Sassoon, "Base Details," *War Poems*, p. 48. Vildrac, "Elégie à Henri Doucet," *Chants du désespéré* (Paris: N. R. F., 1920), p. 46.

[59] Lloyd *Paths*, p. 114.

> On leur a envoyé sa croix--Légion d'Honneur--
> Son père, qui a les yeux perdus dans un songe affreux,
> Dit:--Leur croix!
> Il a sa croix de bois, là-bas, avec les autres.[61]

The distinction between victims and those responsible, between the passive and the active, is, basically, the division between those who carry the burden for society's adherence to the patriotic-heroic myth, and those who promote it, for whatever reason. The metaphor which Eliot Crawshay-Williams has drawn in "To War, the Harlot, and her Souteneurs," epitomises this aspect of the protest.[62] The speaker wonders who it is who sustains the harlot, War, dressing and adorning her, and teaching her to speak in "sounding and specious phrases," so that, instead of being "scorned and accursed and outlawed of mankind," she is allowed to ply freely her "deadly trade" of attracting "lovely youth and manhood" to their destruction. He claims that, if only her victims could be made aware of the process of adornment, and of how some people profit by war, they would "Hound from their hiding-places the vile crew / That keeps and tends and battens upon" the harlot, leaving her with her "lewd and loathsome nakedness laid bare / For all to spurn."

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[60] Pfemfert, p. 92.

[61] Martinet, p. 82.

[62] Crawshay-Williams, Clouds and the Sun (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1919), pp. 16-17.

The matter of hounding out the "vile crew" which sustains the traditional outlook involves a major realignment in the question of allies and opponents. Official enemies become "ô frères inconnus," "Mein Bruder Feind," "the enemy you killed, my friend," and the new opposition is primarily the civilian population of the poet's own or of all countries. The totality of the new division, which is precisely the opposite of the favourite "we / you" dichotomy of patriotic poets, is summarised in Pierre Drieu la Rochelle's lines in "Plainte des soldats européens:"

> Partage de l'humanité par la guerre:
> Les combattants et les non-combattants.[63]

He adds "la plupart des généraux" and "les embusqués" to his list of non-combatants. It is noticeable that the sort of people who are much revered in patriotic verse are particularly subject to attack--military and civilian leaders, clerics, even mothers. (Protest poems which, like those quoted earlier, recognise some civilians as fellow-victims, are relatively unusual.) Sassoon's general, cheerful but incompetent, greeted "Harry" and "Jack" in a friendly manner on their way "to the line," and "did for them both with his plan of attack," while Georges Chennevière depicts the leaders as calculating and uncaring, rather than incompetent:

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[63] Interrogations (Paris: N. R. F., 1917), p. 27.

> Le massacre est prévu, compté, réglé d'avance,
> Pour cent mètres de terre et de la gloire en mots.[64]

Although no "High-priests of War" or other "ministers, and Princes, and Great Men," are immune, profiteers are, not surprisingly, particularly unpopular.[65] Karl Otten addresses one of his poems to "Den Bürgern, die in diesen Jahren Millionäre wurden," and Vildrac attacks "les trafiquants du monde," whose values are

> Patrie, population, territoire, effectifs,
> Main-d'oeuvre, marchandise,
> Toutes choses qu'on divise
> Ou qu'on additionne.[66]

The part played by the church in promoting the myth is widely condemned--by Oskar Kanehl in "Soldatenmisshandlung," for instance, where the soldiers, exhausted after a day's march, are made to endure a church service, in which the preacher

> schmeisst auf uns geduldige Gemeinde
> im Namen Gottes
> Beleidigung aller unsrer Feinde,

or by Osbert Sitwell, who imagines how the bishops, "Cantuar, Ebor, and the other ones," would "preach and prance" in their pulpits, "mad with joy" about a Parliamentary speech vowing never to make peace until all the young men are "cripples, on one leg, or dead."[67]

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[64] Sassoon, "The General," War Poems, p. 50; Chennevière, "Ravitaillement," Poètes contre, p. 48.

[65] Margaret Sackville, "The Pageant of War," Pageant, p. 15; Sassoon, "Great Men," Lloyd, Paths, p. 93.

[66] Karl Otten, Die Thronerhebung des Herzens, Der rote Hahn, 4 (Berlin-Wilmersdorf: Die Aktion, 1918), p. 40; Vildrac, "Élégie à Henri Doucet," Chants, p. 45.

[67] Kanehl, Die Schande, p. 8; Sitwell, "Armchair," Lloyd, Poems, p. 85.

While a sense of enmity towards obvious manipulators, the military, political and social leaders who use the war, "decked out" appropriately, to maintain their own position of power, is to be expected, it is perhaps surprising that many of the poets display equal acrimony towards the "man-on-the-street" at home. They condemn him mainly for his unquestioning acceptance of the official viewpoint, and for his lack of real concern about the suffering of combatants. André Spiré accuses him of indifference:

> On tue, on assassine,
> Ce n'est pas ton affaire, crois-tu.
> Pense à ta petite besogne
> Et fais-y ton gain si tu peux.[68]

A speaker in J. N. Hall's "Hate" contrasts the attitude in London with that at the Front:

> You oughter see their faces when they arsts yer about the 'Uns!
> Lor! Lummy! They ain't arf a bloodthirsty lot.
> An' the women as bad as the men.
> I was glad to git back to the trenches again
> Where there's more of a 'uman feelin'.[69]

Martinet, in "Droit des gens," deplores the dual standard which says that to kill civilians is "un crime affreux," while "Qu'on tue les soldats, c'est la guerre." He reminds the "hypocrites" to whom the poem is addressed that "Ces soldats, ces morts, c'était la plus belle jeunesse du monde."[70] As an extension of the division between civilians and soldiers, the age gap contributes to the bitterness.

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[68] "Petits Gens," Le Secret (Paris: N. R. F., 1919), p. 95.
[69] "Hate," Lloyd, Poems, p. 50.
[70] Martinet, p. 118, p. 120.

Karl Otten imagines the young being raised especially for slaughter:

> Man wartete ihr neunzehntes Jahr ab, um sie nach dem
> Kodex zerhacken zu können.
> Man lauert auf die Kinder, prüft ihre Gelenke, ihre
> Muskeln,
> Und fragt sich ob es bald so weit ist.[71]

F. S. Flint claims that

> The young men of the world
> Are condemned to death.
> They have been called up to die
> For the crime of their fathers,

and Eliot Crawshay-Williams' "Sonnet of a Son" begins, "Because I am young, therefore I must be killed."[72]

Women fare little better than the old at the hands of the protesters. Sassoon portrays them, in "Glory of Women" and "Their Frailty," as concerned chiefly with decorations, wounds "in a mentionable place," "laurelled memories," and the safety only of their particular combatant.[73] Martinet's "Elles disent..." depicts some women at a tea-party discussing Latzko and Barbusse, and concluding

> N'est-ce pas, si c'était comme ils disent,
> Tellement horrible,
> Nous ne pourrions pas supporter,
> Nous n'avons pas le coeur si dur.
> Ce n'est pas possible,

before proceeding to their next cup of tea.[74] In "Femmes" he expresses sympathy for the loss of their husbands or sons, but reminds them, "Vous les avez laissé mourir."[75] Margaret Sackville voices a similar view, on behalf of mothers, in "Nostra Culpa:"

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[71] "Für Martinet," Thronerhebung, p. 11.

[72] Flint, "Lament," Otherworld. Cadences (London: Poetry Bookshop, 1920), p. 49; Crawshay-Williams, The Gutter and the Stars (London: Erskine Macdonald, 1918), p. 29.

[73] War Poems, p. 57, p. 58.

[74] Temps maudits, p. 122.

> We knew, this thing at least we knew,--the worth
> Of life: this was our secret learned at birth.
> . . .   We spoke not, so men died.[76]

Because of this betrayal, she says, they must now reap the harvest of their own sowing. Helen Hamilton criticises the typical "jingo-woman" who hands out white feathers and insults to young men not in uniform, trying to "flout and goad" men into doing what she is not required to do herself.[77]

The accusations in these poems, whether of thoughtlessness, of callousness, or of the murder of innocent compatriots, are symptoms of a bitter animosity towards those who use the myth to maintain the status quo in their society, or who subscribe enthusiastically to such manipulation. A few of the writers owe their condemnatory attitude towards representatives of the established order to their a priori disagreement (that is, pre-dating the war) with the existing social system. The most notable of them is probably Martinet, who from the beginning urged his fellow Socialists to remember that their real enemies were "l'actionnaire des mines," "le patron-verrier," and "le jeune homme en smoking," not workers like themselves who happened to live in other countries.[78] For most, however, their social criticism appears to have been a consequence of their recognition of the disparity between the reality of war and what the myth and its perpetuators had led people to expect. Yet, whether they came to it early or late, there is no doubt that the protest poets share a deep sense of enmity, quite as strong as that which divides one country from another in patriotic verse, and that their animosity infuses their writing totally.

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[75] Ibid., p. 68.
[76] Pageant, p. 36.
[77] "The Jingo-Woman," Reilly, Scars, pp. 47-49.

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[78] "Tu vas te battre," p. 56.

VI. The Functioning of Propaganda Poetry

It is something of a truism amongst critics of the English war poetry that the main concern of the poets was, as Bergonzi says of Sassoon, "to use poetry as a means of forcibly impressing on the civilian world some notion of the realities of front-line life."[5] When the English protest poetry is placed in an international context, one appreciates that this supposed common goal is only one of several manifestations of the overwhelming sense of enmity and alienation which is the most universal characteristic of the protest writing in all three languages. Animosity towards the upholders of the myth is an example of the "gross dichotomizing" which Fussell recognises in many aspects of the war and its literature, (present, too, as Bergonzi's sentence indicates, in its literary criticism), and the sort of "remorselessly binary" approach which he finds in Sassoon's writing is widely evident in the poetry.[6] Yet while the "actualities" of the war may, as Fussell claims, have helped to develop such a binary "we-they" outlook, there are also poetic antecedents, both in the poetry and folk-song of political and social protest in general, and, more immediately, in the "public" patriotic verse of the war itself. The patriotic writing of William Watson and the protest poetry of Wilfred Owen are not ordinarily considered by war-poetry critics to belong under the same roof, yet many of their poems, and others like them, have in common not only a primarily "social," propagandist intent, but also an attitude of implacable enmity towards an alien group, and the recognition of this similarity allows one to see the protest poetry in an unusual light.

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[5] Bergonzi, p. 97.
[6] Fussell, p. 82.

E. A. Mackintosh's "Recruiting," a poem of which every aspect is affected by the author's sense of alienation, serves as a useful example through which to discuss the workings of the protest poetry and, at the same time, to prove its kinship with the poetry of the patriotic-heroic myth which it is seeking to discredit.[3] Mackintosh makes quite explicitly the opposition between combatants and non-combatants. The cowardly and hypocritical civilians about whom he has not a good word to say--the "fat old men," the "girls with feathers," the "blasted journalist,"--and his idealised soldiers, leading honest and healthy lives "Underneath the open sky," represent polarities quite as extreme as any in patriotic verse. So intent is he on emphasising the difference that his representation of the soldiers' life--"Better twenty honest years / Than their dull three score and ten"--comes full circle, back to the myth itself:

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[3] "Recruiting," Gardner, pp. 111-12.

> You shall learn what men can do
> If you will but pay the price,
> Learn the gaiety and strength
> In the gallant sacrifice.

In the stanza

> Fat civilians wishing they
> 'Could go and fight the Hun.'
> Can't you see them thanking God
> That they're over forty-one?

Mackintosh draws the kind of direct contrast between "truth" and the words of the myth which is characteristic of the protest writing, and yet which is also reminiscent of patriotic poems which mock the words of the enemy--Ludwig Ganghofer's "Du 'Gentleman!' Nun wird dies Wort / Ein ekelhafter Schimpf auf Erden," for example.[4] Mackintosh's approach in general is deliberately offensive; he insults the civilians by belittling them in many ways, he dismisses their poetry as "washy verse," and in the lines

> God--and don't we damned well know
> How the message ought to read,

he employs language which one must assume he knows to be unacceptable to a large number of potential readers. Nor is he averse to using sarcasm against them, urging the "lads" to volunteer so that they can help to keep the despised civilians "nice and safe / From the wicked German foe." One is reminded of the many patriotic poems which speak of the enemy in much the same way, with invective and insult, sarcasm, and a totality of "loaded" words which allow only for a black-and-white viewpoint. Fussell maintains that "civilised ambiguity" is one of the first victims of war;[5] certainly it has no part in the battle which the "public" poets wage, whether in the primary campaign on behalf of their country, or in the secondary war against the myth and its supporters.

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[4] "Wilhelm der Grosse," Deutsches Flugblatt, p. 8.

The analogy between poetry and warfare is perhaps not entirely appropriate, because the shafts which the poets aim at their enemy in this verbal war are not, apparently, designed to reach as far as the enemy's line. The use of sarcasm is a case in point. Like other forms of irony, sarcasm involves a distinction between knowing and lack of knowledge, in that the words may, in theory at least, be taken at their face value by the "unknowing," but the cognoscenti appreciate the author's intended meaning. The inference is that the poet is writing for an implied reader who shares his knowledge and outlook, and that he has no desire to be conciliatory towards the victims of his attack. Invective, too, suggests divisiveness rather than persuasion, and that effect is enhanced if the poet uses a language which his enemy does not understand. For example, when "Caliban" writes sarcastically of "Tommy Atkins" as "feinste Kultur unter Lack," or when William Watson makes his superbly vituperative comments about the Kaiser ("Thou sceptred Smear / Across the Day"), they have, clearly, no intention of trying to convert the opposing side to their way of thinking, nor, because of the language barrier, do they more than pretend that the enemy will read their poems. The readers for whom their work is created are sympathetic towards their cause, and while they may hope ultimately to annihilate the enemy's position, their immediate intention is to incite a feeling of enmity in their compatriots, that is, in people who are already at least partially converted. However, because enmity is the original reason for the poem's existence, poets like Watson and "Caliban" write with a close eye upon the enemy whom, for the fulfilling of their purpose of unifying their compatriots, they must appear to wish to offend. If their imagined sympathetic audience is to be identified as the "implied reader," then the deliberately excluded group, against whom the poem is directed, may perhaps be designated, for convenience, as "non-readers."

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[5] Fussell, p. 79-80.

In that the protest poetry employs many of the same devices as patriotic verse--sarcasm, invective, the elimination of ambiguity, for example--its position vis-à-vis reader and "non-reader" must be seen in the same light. The implied reader ("you") of "Recruiting," for example, like the "we"-audience of patriotic verse, is sympathetic to the poet's viewpoint and able to appreciate the deliberately provocative nature of his approach. This poem, too, posits excluded "non-readers," supporters of the myth and preservers of the social status quo, whom it designs to shock or anger, by attacking the very precepts which that enemy holds most dear. The usual critical assumption is that the protest poets were intent on conveying their view of the war to the "civilian world" at large, but one finds more evidence in the poetry of an attempt to antagonise the mass of readers than to persuade them to listen. The poets' goal was certainly to spread their message, and ultimately to convert others to their way of thinking, but it is difficult to ignore the extreme animosity in the poetry. Joseph Cohen simply wishes it away, when he writes of Sassoon that "his rash attacks alienated many whom he might otherwise have induced to accept his point of view," but Cohen overlooks the fact that alienation is a vital factor in Sassoon's technique.[6] His poetry, after the manner of patriotic verse, works by reinforcing the attitude of the like-minded, rather than by attempting to convert the enemy. The "many," including Owen's "dullards whom no cannon stuns," Martinet's often-maligned "civils," "die fetten Eunuchen des Himmelspalastes" who have banished "den bärtigen Jesu Christ" in Hans Koch's "Karfreitag 1915," are quite as much outside the realm of persuasion as the "non-readers" of Watson's "To the German Emperor" or Lissauer's "Hassgesang gegen England."[7]

Accordingly, one must question statements like that of J. H. Johnston, who maintains that "the poet who had some prospect of publishing his verse" regarded his mission as being "to communicate his sense of the reality of war to the millions at home who could not or would not appreciate the magnitude of the experiences and sacrifices of the common soldier."[8] Since Johnston is obviously concerned here, not with the literary-theorist's "implied reader," but with the harsh practicalities of "some prospect" of publication and a "ready public outlet" (a phrase he uses in the same connection), one wonders about the possible identity of this protest poet who can anticipate an audience of "millions." It seems improbable that writers whose "ready public outlet" was The Nation imagined that they were communicating with a vast number of readers, just as it is doubtful whether any soldier-poet submitting his work to Die Aktion expected that "millions" would read that "by-subscription-only" magazine. While the distinction amongst actual, implied and "non"-readers is perhaps mainly a technicality, it provides a means of avoiding such inaccuracy, as well as a way of clarifying one's understanding of the relationship of propaganda poets with their audience. One can quite correctly impute to a poet the intention of affecting his reader in a particular way, but if this implied reader is made equivalent to a specific group of people, whose existence is in the empirical world outside the text, caution is needed. Mis-statements like Johnston's are particularly reprehensible in an area where so much critical emphasis has always been placed on the factual, historical background against which the poetry operates.

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[6] "The Three Roles of Siegfried Sassoon," Tulane Studies of English, 7 (1957), p. 175.

[7] Owen, "Insensibility," Collected Poems, p. 38; Koch, "Karfreitag 1915," Pfemfert, p. 74.

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[8] Johnston, p. 12.

The propaganda poets, whether for or against the myth, stand in much the same relationship to their readers and "non-readers" as a politician addressing a crowd of his supporters (or at least of people who are prepared to listen), possibly seeming, at times, to speak directly to the opposing party, and relying considerably on his awareness of his opponents to provide the material for his speech. That the poets regard themselves as speechmakers--a role which incorporates that of spokesman--is evident in the oratorical manner which most of them adopt, with an abundance of pleas, commands, exclamations and rhetorical questions. Although Welland differentiates between the "bardic rhetoric" of patriotic verse and the poetry of protest, the latter proves to be at least as rhetorical as the former, in the hands of poets like Renaitour--"Tuer! Toujours tuer! Mon Dieu! pourquoi tuai-je?"--Otten--"Schaut auf! Redet! Sprecht! Fangt an!"--or "A. E." (George Russell)--"How wanes Thine empire, Prince of Peace!"[9] In view of the close association between most of the German protest poetry and the Expressionist movement, it is not surprising that Expressionism's declamatory tone, and its favoured (and parodied) exclamation, "O, Mensch!" should be much in evidence there. However, "Ô"-poetry is equally characteristic of the French writing, and many English protest poets are hardly less exhortative, as a glance at Lloyd's anthologies shows. Even those writers who avoid the declamatory extremes of Martinet and Goll and Otten tend to direct their poems towards specific people--Owen's "my friend" in "Dulce et Decorum Est," the unnamed "you" in Mackintosh's "Recruiting," the "smug-faced crowds" of Sassoon's "Suicide in Trenches"--so the potential for rhetoric remains strong, and the sententious, "bardic" language of patriotic verse is by no means lacking in the protest poetry. Removed from their context, such lines as "Vous vous prépariez à la Vie comme à une longue course," "Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds," "O ihr hymnischen Menschen, Jünglinge meiner Zeit," "O Star of Peace, rise swiftly in the East," or "O constance des coeurs qui ne fleuriront plus," could almost as easily be from pro-war as from anti-war writing.[10]

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[9] Renaitour, "Tuer," Poètes contre, p. 116; Otten, "Die jungen Dichter," Thronerhebung, p. 22; "A. E.," "Gods of War," Lloyd, Paths, p. 22.

Although the analogy of the "public" poet with a political speaker is valid for both "pro-war" and "anti-war" writers, there is an important difference in their relationship with their audience and the excluded group. For poets like Watson and Lissauer the use of their mother-tongue, serving, as language so often does, to exclude as well as to unite, immediately makes clear the identity of their intended audience (hence the fact that the various terms for patria are rarely ambiguous). Since this convenient device is not available when "we" and the enemy share the same language, the protest poets must find other means of establishing a comparable barrier between those who sympathise with their cause and those whom they assume to be opposed to it. Their technique is to make a barrier of animosity itself, establishing in any possible way the completeness of their divergence from the norms which the proponents of the myth take for granted. For example, Mackintosh's overt rejection of euphemism and hypocrisy is echoed in his deliberately unpoetic, conversational tone and his down-to-earth language, which gives way at times to what his contemporaries no doubt regarded as profanity. The result in general is a tone of irreverence, strongly reminiscent of folksongs of social or political protest, where a "thumb-to-nose" attitude towards the established order, in addition to being a part of the doctrine of the cause, helps to unite the audience in a mood of defiance. Particularly relevant examples are to be found amongst Irish rebel ballads concerning the 1916 Dublin uprising, such as "The Recruiting Sergeant," the tale of a man whose task is made impossible, when the young Irishmen he approaches declare

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[10] Lois Cendré, "Aux sacrificiés," *Poètes contre*, p. 45; Owen, "Anthem for Doomed Youth," *Collected Poems*, p. 44; Ywan Goll, "Elegie für die Ausziehenden," *Requiem: Für die Gefallenen von Europa* (Zürich: Rascher, 1917), p. 10; Paul Bewsher, "Nox Mortis," *The Bombing of Bruges*, p. 46; Martinet, "Sang des morts," *Temps maudits*, p. 91.

> We're not going out to Flanders, o!
> There's fighting in Dublin to be done;
> Let your sergeants and commanders go.

Let Englishmen for England fight,
'Tis just about time they started, o![11]

Dominic Behan reports that "In 1917, 14 young men were sentenced to terms of from six to twelve months for singing this 'seditious' ballad"--another indication of the fact that such an approach is divisive rather than persuasive.[12]

Although the existence of a "non-reader" alongside the implied reader is an important feature in both types of "public" poetry, the apparent desire to offend or provoke has necessarily a more thorough effect in the protest writing, since it must establish, as well as sustain, the barrier between the groups. The protest poets draw many of their weapons from the recognition that their "non-reader" is precisely the person for whom patriotic verse is written, so that various possible means of causing offence are at hand. In addition to discrediting the various facets of the myth (as the previous chapter showed), many of them find other devices which are more specifically associated with poetic technique. The simple, conversational style which Mackintosh and Lichtenstein choose, and which is characteristic also of Sassoon's protest poems, is not, of course, inherently shocking, but a part of its value for the poets lies in its alienating effect upon readers attuned to poetry in the manner of William Watson and Albrecht Schaeffer. (Even a sympathetic contemporary critic, Sturge

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[11] Dominic Behan, Songs of the Irish Republican Army, Riverside Records, RLP 12-820, 1957.

[12] Jacket notes, ibid.

Moore, found Sorley's language "poor and thin."[13]) On the other hand, it is not uncommon to find protest poets resorting, as Mackintosh does, to (mild) profanity in their determination to make their language as "foreign" as possible to devotees of patriotic verse.[14] There is an obvious parallel with the tradition that soldiers' songs, of the Great War and others, are profane and disrespectful; they, too, work to unify and encourage one group, while excluding others, but they differ from both patriotic verse and protest poetry in that they maintain simultaneously two distinct enmities, the official enemy and the "powers-that-be," with the implication that the ordinary soldier is caught in the middle. That the songs persist in spite of the soldier's powerlessness to alter his circumstances is an indication of the valuable palliative effect of name-calling.

It is also important to recall that the idea of disturbing the _Burger_ or "Philistines" was an inheritance from immediately pre-war _avant garde_ artistic circles, and from various nineteenth-century predecessors, so that, for instance, simply to write in free verse, instead of adhering to a recognisable metric pattern, was to place oneself on the side of the rebels. (The shock effect of radical verse-forms was probably stronger in England and Germany than in France, where the initial poetic revolution was already several decades old, and where Claudel and Fort were able to make their patriotic declarations in non-traditional metre, without generating cries of outrage.) In German poetry the effect of being a rebel was increased, both before and during the war, by the Expressionists' preference for Roman instead of Gothic print, to the extent that a mere glance at the printed page usually gives an indication of the poet's attitude towards the war and the established order. The context of publication also had its effect in making a work seem "seditious." Even in a peacetime situation certain journals were proud to be regarded as provocative--Blast, for instance, or the American poetry magazine Others. Ortheil quotes from a mocking newspaper review of a June 1914 poetry-reading in which Wilhelm Klemm took part. The reviewer notes the harmless-looking surroundings--"es sieht gar nicht so revolutionär aus"--but reminds his readers that the organisers of the event are Franz Pfemfert and his associates in Die Aktion, and, he continues, "schreckliche Dinge sind darum zu erwarten." (Klemm is the first of the "furchtbar wilden Dichter" to be called upon to read.)[15] That particular authors allowed themselves to be identified with magazines like Die Aktion during the war was certainly enough to give an aura of rebelliousness to work which was not intrinsically protest writing.

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[13] _Some Soldier Poets_ (London: Grant Richards, 1919), p. 55.

[14] Welland traces the evolution of the last line of Owen's "The Chances" in the manuscript, from "The old, old lot" via "The ruddy lot" to "The bloody lot;" the resultant "solitary epithet," he says, "intensifies the protest." Welland, p. 69.

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[15] Ortheil, p. 26.

Some of the so-called "realism" of the protest poetry, the poet's apparent urge to "tell the truth," must also be regarded as an alienating device, intended to shock rather than to inform. Looking back upon the period, and on his own and Owen's writing, Sassoon observed,

> Let it be remembered that, when this [Owen's "The Show"] was written, all truthful reportings of experience were regarded as unpatriotic and subversive to War Effort. Officialdom suppressed, and the great majority of non-combatants shunned and resented, such revelations. Sensitive people couldn't bear to be told the facts.[16]

To tell "the facts," therefore, was deliberately to offend those representatives of the "other side." The single factor which characterises most of the poems in Franz Pfemfert's 1914-1916 anthology is their "factual" picture of the war; if realism of this kind was indeed Pfemfert's primary criterion in making his selection, the implication is that he equated it with the sort of provocative anti-war protest, based on the belief that "der Chauvinismus ist die ständige Lebensgefahr der Menschheit," which he promoted initially in Die Aktion, but which was forced from its "shelter" by the threat of total censorship after his editorial statement in August 1914. Patrick Bridgwater similarly equates realism with protest, when he writes, "The typical front-line poet of the First World War portrays the suffering and tragedy around him as an implicit, or--if he is a satirist--explicit protest against the war in which he is involved."[17]

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[16] B.B.C. talk, August 22, 1948, reprinted in T. J. Walsh, ed., A Tribute to Wilfred Owen ([Birkenhead], n.d.), p. 38.

The term "realism" occurs almost inevitably in critical writing about the protest poetry, and it appears to have two possible meanings. In its wider sense, which would encompass all of the protest poetry, it implies a readiness to view the war realistically, that is, without the idealisation inherent in the patriotic-heroic myth. J. M. Gregson uses the word in that way in his chapter-title, "Charles Sorley and the First Hints of Realism."[18] Its second meaning refers to the attempt of poets "to represent or to imitate observable realities,"[19] that is, to what Welland calls their "graphic fidelity," Lane the "experiential actuality" of their poetry, and Johnston their "savage" or "crude" or "photographic" realism and "their obsessive emphasis on isolated and irrelevant sensory detail."[20] The consensus of these critics is that, as Lane phrases it, the poets wish to "communicate a felt reality to those who, by accident or by choice, are cut off from this reality."[21] The "reality" he has in mind is that of life at the Front, but it is significant that some combatant protest poets apply the same "graphic fidelity" to situations which civilians could easily observe for themselves, as Owen does in "Disabled" and "Mental Cases," Sassoon in "Does it Matter?" and Piscator in "Der Mutter zweier Söhne, welche fielen," for example. Obviously these poets recognise that it is a mental attitude as much as the physical situation which cuts people off from the "felt reality" of the war.

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[17] Bridgwater, p. 163.

[18] Poetry of the First World War (London: Edward Arnold, 1976).

[19] Michael Hamburger and Christopher Middleton, eds., Modern German Poetry, 1910 to 1960 (New York: Grove, 1962), p. xxi.

[20] Welland, p. 29; Arthur E. Lane, An Adequate Response (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1972), p. 21; Johnston, p. 13.

[21] Lane, p. 24.

Johnston finds (and condemns) in the poetry a "compulsive focus on the obscene details of crude animal needs and reactions, on wounds, death, and decomposition," but his comment would apply much more accurately to prose writing about the war.[22] The "photographic realism" with which the poets apparently choose to introduce their readers and "non-readers" to the truth of the situation at the Front is decidedly less "crude" than that in many novels and memoirs of the war, or even in diaries and letters. Their preoccupation with "sensory detail" leads them only infrequently to deal at any length with unpleasant or sordid effects, almost as if a standard of acceptable conduct for poetry had been applied. Certainly Wilhelm Klemm's "Lazarett" stands apart from most of the other poetry as a "truthful reporting." The poem describes the scene in a military hospital, where "Jeden Morgen ist wieder Krieg," as the wounded are brought in:

> Die Skala der Gerüche:
> Die grossen Eimer voll Eiter, Watte, Blut, amputierten Gliedern,
> Die Verbände voll Maden. Die Wunden voll Knochen und Stroh.

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[22] Johnston, p. 13.

> . . .
> Ein Darm hängt heraus. Aus einem zerrissenen Rucken
> quoll die Milz und der Magen. Ein Kreuzbein klafft um
> ein Astloch,
> Am Amputationsstumpf brandet das Fleisch in die Höhe.
>
> Pilzartig wuchernd Ströme von hellgrünem Eiter
> fliessen; über das Fleisch herausragend
> pulsiert der unterbundene Arterienstamm.[23]

By comparison with "Lazarett," Graves' "certain cure for boodlust," his "dead Boche," who "scowled and stunk / With clothes and face a sodden green," or the "naked sodden buttocks, mats of hair, / Bulged, clotted heads" of the corpses in Sassoon's "Counter-Attack" are quite bearable, while the "sensory detail" of Owen's "Dulce et Decorum est," another of the apparently more "truthful" poems in English, owes less to "photographic realism" than to the quest for poetic effect.[24] The most "shockingly" realistic lines in that account of a soldier's death by gas tell how his blood comes

> . . . gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
> Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
> Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues.

The sores, however, are not part of the scene, but of a simile related only loosely to the visual or aural "facts" (and incidentally, as Welland points out, a late amendment to Owen's manuscript).[25] Its value lies in providing an emotional link between the man's suffering and the vulnerability of "children ardent for some desperate glory," thus emphasising the urgency of discrediting "the old Lie." Jon Silkin writes of Sassoon that "The gap between the accepted or acceptable poetic norm and the facts themselves provides the energy with which his satire operates;"[26] a similar gap generates the power for Owen's protest, and for that of many other poets who appear to be chiefly concerned with "the facts themselves." In their writing the "truth" per se is less important than the way in which it is used in juxtaposition with the "poetic norm" of the myth. Accordingly, Gurney needs to resort to no more gory description than the words "red wet / Thing" to produce a sense of horror, when he places the object which used to be his friend in a pastoral and elegaic context, alongside "memoried flowers" and the idea of noble death.[27] Klemm's poem, on the other hand, lacks such juxtaposition of truth against myth, and, as a result, must find the "energy" for its protest in a more shocking kind of realism.

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[23] "Lazarett," Pfemfert, pp. 71-72.

[24] Graves, "A Dead Boche," Fairies and Fusiliers, p. 33; Sassoon, War Poems, p. 41; Owen, Collected Poems, p. 55.

[25] Welland, p. 50.

Oddly enough, apart from the presumably deliberate shock effects of its horrifying details, "Lazarett" does not leave the impression of being a work of propaganda. It lacks the characteristic delineation between victims and manipulators, and posits no excluded "non-reader." Nor has the *persona* anything in common with the impassioned speech-maker and spokesman who addresses the "smug-faced crowds" in Sassoon's "Suicide in Trenches," or who pleads with the workers of

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[26] Out of Battle, pp. 154-155.
[27] "To His Love," Poems p. 42.

Europe in Martinet's "Tu vas te battre." Klemm's persona is an impartial observer; although not totally outside the picture at which the simile in the second line, "Nackte Verwundete, wie auf alten Gemälden," hints--a doctor, perhaps, surveying the wounded and their surroundings, avoiding "Die Fetzen geronnenen Blutes, auf denen man ausgleitet"--he refrains from partisan involvement in the suffering of individual patients. Further, unlike the similarly (though less starkly) realistic poems of Sassoon and Owen, "Lazarett" does not measure the reality directly against the myth, or make any accusation of deceit. On the contrary, Klemm uses patriotic-heroic terms quite without irony, when he describes the sounds of dying:

> . . . das Geheul, das Wimmern und Schrein, das Jammern und Flehen,
> Das schweigende Heldentum und rührende: "fürs Vaterland."

This ambivalence leads one to wonder whether shocking others into condemnation of the war was in fact the author's main intention. One encounters a similar problem with Isaac Rosenberg's poetry; for example, "Dead Man's Dump" is to a considerable extent "shockingly" realistic, with lines like "The wheels lurched over sprawled dead" or "a man's brains splattered on / A stretcher-bearer's face," but the realism is not turned into a comment on the patriotic-heroic myth.[28] There is certainly more compassion throughout this poem than in Klemm's, yet, as Silkin observes, there is no indication that Rosenberg considers himself to be a spokesman, addressing a particular audience on behalf of other people,[29] nor, one might add, is his poetry directed against a "non-reader." Although it is possible that the two poets, like Pfemfert, equated all realism with protest, the lack of other protest features suggests that one should look for a different explanation for their concern with "graphic fidelity" than the urge to convey the "truth" to those at home. One might suspect that Klemm's main interest, in "Lazarett," was with the aesthetics of hideousness, but it has none of the bravado of Gottfried Benn's "Morgue" poems, and any impression that Klemm, like Benn, was primarily intent on establishing that his subject was as suitable as any other for poetry is dispelled by the compassion of the last two stanzas. Accurate representation of "the facts," it seems, was important for reasons other than the sake of art.

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[28] Collected Works, p. 110.

A declaration of something like aestheticism seems to lie behind a comment in one of Rosenberg's letters, when he writes, "I will not leave a corner of my consciousness covered up, but saturate myself with the strange and extraordinary new conditions of this life, and it will all refine itself into poetry later on."[30] However, the tendency to seize upon these words as proof of Rosenberg's unusual powers of detachment leads one to overlook a possibly more important aspect, his reference to the "strange and extraordinary" conditions of the trenches. In a recent study of the war from a psycho-historical viewpoint, No Man's Land, Eric J. Leed claims that the enduring psychological effect of the war on combatants who survived came mainly from their awareness of having existed in two "incommensurable" societies, their pre-war life on the one hand, and life at the Front on the other, with a resultant feeling of "psychic and social estrangement," of "radical discontinuity" and with the loss of a sense of identity.[31] In attempting to specify how the new reality was, as Rosenberg described it, "strange and extraordinary," Leed suggests that the strangeness arose from the breakdown of what in normal circumstances are usually considered as mutually exclusive categories, such as alive and dead, human and animal, or animate and inanimate. He continues:

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[29] Penguin, p. 31.
[30] Letter to Laurence Binyon, Collected Works, p. 248.

> But war experience is nothing if not a transgression of categories. In providing bridges across the boundaries between the visible and the invisible, the known and the unknown, the human and the inhuman, war offered numerous occasions for the shattering of distinctions that were central to orderly thought, communicable experience, and normal human relations. Much of the bewilderment, stupefaction, or sense of growing strangeness to which combatants testified can be attributed to those realities of war that broke down . . . "our cherished classifications."[32]

To a surprisingly large extent, the realism of the combatant poets focuses upon such "bridges." For example, a recurring motif is the circumstance of dwelling in the ground like an animal, rather than on its surface, exposed to the elements instead of with the customary "roof over one's head." The abnormal situation of living amongst the dead is explored in numerous poems, such as those in which corpses are given the attributes of the living, or, as in Gurney's "red wet / Thing," are stripped of all human connection, or those which emphasise how very thin, yet how absolute, is the borderline between life and death. A major concern is the need to accustom oneself to the fact that human "flesh, and blood, and brains,"[33] which, to borrow R. D. Laing's term, belong "inside," have become a part of the "outside" world, where, in a long tradition, they have always been objects of revulsion. Leed maintains that "In the literature of war one can see clearly those patterns used to shape the disorder of the environment, patterns which allow the participant to determine exactly what is anomalous, uncanny, or ironical about the juxtapositions of men and things that he finds."[34] The most important pattern, for poets who write realistically, is undoubtedly their "remorselessly binary" approach. Although Fussell explains this attitude as being largely the consequence of the "total opposition" situation of trench warfare, its root more probably lies, as Leed's hypothesis suggests, at a deeper level of consciousness, in "the shattering of distinctions that were central to orderly thought." In this light, much of the "gross dichotomizing" (to use Fussell's phrase) in the realistic poetry may be regarded as an exploration of "limits," an examination of how the war "bridges" normally exclusive categories, or creates distinctions where none previously existed--an exploration undertaken less for the sake of the reader than for the poet's own benefit, as he attempts to "impose meaning, pattern and significance" on a world of disorder.[35]

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[31] No Man's Land (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 3.

[32] Leed, p. 21.

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[33] Leslie Coulson, "Who Made the Law," From an Outpost, p. 9.

[34] Leed, p. 12.

Silkin finds Edmund Blunden's war poetry "hard to characterise."[36] The poems of Kurd Adler may leave one with a similar sense of unease, especially if one assumes that the purpose of realistic poetry is to generate anti-war sentiment, or at the very least to make a statement of "the truth." On the other hand, if one approaches the work of these two poets with the assumption that their primary concern is to pinpoint the abnormalities of their situation as a means of "ordering" their world, then their poetry is far less problematic. A recurring motif in Adler's poetry is a sense of amazement that two wholly disparate realities can co-exist. The individual serves as a pivotal point between "hinter uns," with its "Tiere, Frauen," "Eisenbahnen / und keine Grenze," and the "Von Grauen durchklungene Nacht" which lies "vor uns;" the past and present in personal lives, which should be a continuum, have been severed--"Fast ist es seltsam, dass wir Menschen waren /

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Out of Battle, p. 102.

denen das Leben wie Gebete schien;" the traditional and fitting serenity of a rural summer evening is shattered by a bomb attack, and the speaker's parenthesised comment epitomises a common feeling of incredulity at the impropriety of such instants of encounter between "incommensurable" facts:

> (Am Abend noch--am weichen, lauen Abend--
> lagen sechs Mützen voll Blut und Schmutz am
> Gassenrand.)[37]

While Adler's technique is to separate the two sides of the dichotomy, thus emphasising the point of their meeting, Blunden prefers to impose "pattern" on his environment by a complete intermingling of categories--art and reality, for instance, or the constructive and destructive in man, as well as the more obvious oppositions of animal and human, living and dead--so that the one is always at hand as a point of reference for a comment (frequently ironic) on the other. In "Zero" the artist's eyes see the red dawn, while the realist sees "poor Jock with a gash in the poll;" similarly, in "Vlamertinghe: Passing the Chateau, July, 1917," a scene for a painting or photograph, as the title indicates, the viewer remarks on the inadequacy of both art and nature as indicators of the reality of war.[38] The octet of this sonnet is a play on a line from Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (traditional poetry, here as elsewhere in

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[37] "Ausblick," Pfemfert, p. 14; "Sehr dunkel nur", p. 16; "In der Beobachtung," p. 8.

[38] "Zero," _The Poems of Edmund Blunden_ (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1930), p. 144; "Vlamertinghe," p. 152. "Zero" is also known by a later title, "Come on, My Lucky Lads."

Blunden's war poems, is "art," but the reference is specifically to the fact that Keats' persona, too, is an observer looking at a picture) and it is full of such "transgression of categories" as the sacrifice of men instead of an animal, the experience of living amongst the dead, funereal or artistic flowers joined with the colloquial "not yet gone West," "brute guns," (and a reference back to Keats and "Poetry" in the recognition that the "lowing at the skies" now comes from guns, instead of from the heifer of the "Ode") and the juxtaposing of the two sides of human achievement in the linking of those guns with the "proud mansion." One example amongst many of the particular effectiveness of Blunden's technique occurs in "Third Ypres," in the lines

> The sweet relief, the straggling out of hell
> Into whatever burrows may be given
> For life's recall,"

for the word "burrows" creates subtleties of meaning which no "human" term, such as "refuge" or "shelter," could possibly supply.[39]

Arnold Ulitz's "Gasangriff" is another problematic poem, if one assumes that unpleasant realism is designed as a protest against the war, and especially if one looks for either compassion or irony as its invariable accompaniment.[40] However, if one reads "Gasangriff" as an "exploratory" poem, that is, as the poet's attempt to define the strange and anomalous, one appreciates fully the significance of the event and the importance of the final question, which anticipates one of the twentieth-century's major concerns. The speaker's acknowledgment that dead men are commonplace, while the death of birds is disturbing, is in itself a comment on the abnormality of war, but what is particularly frightening for the attackers is the realisation that their weapon is capable of destroying the natural cycle of the seasons:

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[39] Poems, p. 154.
[40] "Gasangriff," Volkmann, pp. 238-39.

> Vor den toten Menschen sind wir nicht erschrocken,
> Toten Menschen sahn wir zu oft ins Gesicht.
> Aber siehe, siehe! Allerorten
> Fallen tote Vögel von den Bäumen, die verdorrten,
> Fallen fruchtschwer ins ergraute Moos.
> Und wir horchen, wie sie fallen, und wir reden nicht.
>
> Und wir hören auch die toten Blätter fallen,
> Knisternd, wie verbrannt, auf kleine Nachtigallen.
>
> Vor den toten Menschen sind wir nicht erschrocken,
> Vor den toten Vögeln wissen wir mit einem Male:
> Wo wir gehn, da ist bald Herbst geworden,
> Gottes Zeitenfolge müssen wir ermorden.

It is this recognition which leads to the ultimate fearful questioning, not so much of the necessity for war, as of the possibility that this war may have unleashed a kind of destruction from which there may be no recovery:

> Wird noch einmal Frühling werden, Brüder,
> Glaubt ihr noch?

With most of Wilfred Owen's war poems there is no doubt about the author's propagandist intent, for they present, typically, an example of the devastating physical or mental effect of the war on individual soldiers, with comments by the observer persona to underline the message. "Exposure" is atypical in the absence of the author's usual bitterness, and, indeed, in the acknowledgment that the war may have a valid purpose.[41] The soldiers in this poem feel remote from their former life, but there is no indication of enmity towards civilians, and they are "not loath" to be fighting to maintain the "kind fires" of home. The suffering is not imputed to a third person, with the speaker as observer, but is shared by the whole group, and is of such a kind that "Exposure" might easily have served as a model for Leed's theory that is was not "specific, terrifying or horrifying war experiences" which most impressed the combatants, but "the sense of difference and strangeness."[42] The worrying, uncanny silence, the enforced exposure to the "merciless iced east winds," and the inability to re-establish, even through "forgotten dreams," their contact with the world of home, all work to convince the speaker that he and his companions exist in a state between life and death. This is not the sort of realism which can readily be used to arouse sympathy and protest, and it is quite possible that Owen, in this case, was more concerned with trying to "place" the war for himself than with conveying the "truth" to his readers.

Pfemfert's 1914-1916 anthology is dominated by a technique similar to Owen's in "Exposure," where the poet, speaking in a first person plural voice, and using a disjointed present tense rather than the continuous narrative of the past, presents a series of "realistic" impressions of his surroundings. This manner of writing seems to bear out Johnston's contention that Great War poetry is characterised by a "fragmentation of reality" and "an obsessive emphasis on isolated and irrelevant sensory detail."[43] Most of Klemm's poems in the anthology are a compilation of seemingly fortuitous impressions, so loosely bound together that individual lines might easily have been extracted from separate poems. The first stanza of "An der Front" is typical:

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[41] Collected Poems, pp. 48-49.
[42] No Man's Land, p.4-5.

> Das Land ist öde. Die Felder sind wie verweint.
> Auf böser Strasse fährt ein grauer Wagen.
> Von einem Haus ist das Dach herabgerutscht.
> Tote Pferde verfaulen in Lachen.[44]

Hermann Plagge's technique in "Die Schlacht" differs only in having slightly longer sentences and a less cliché-like tone:

> Irgendwo im Graben schreit man kläglich nach
> Sanitätern.
> Ein Toter wird über die Brustwehr geworfen wie Ballast
> aus einem Schiff.
> Kommandos würgen sich durch den Schlund und ersticken.
> Ein Telefon tutet angstvoll in einem Erdloch.
> Bajonette werden von zittrigen Händen aufgepflanzt;
> und ein Trupp Verwegener rennt wie Fussballspieler
> davon.[45]

Oskar Kanehl's "Vormarsch im Winter" begins, like Owen's "Exposure," with icy winds:

> Bespannt von grauem Leichentuche ist der Himmel.
> Das Land schneeüberweht,
> Eiswind peitscht splittriges Glas in unser Fleisch,

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[43] Johnston, p. 13.
[44] Pfemfert, p. 64.
[45] Pfemfert, p. 97.

and continues with a series of sensory impressions, disconnected and momentary, but each contributing, after the manner of pointillism, to the total effect of a march to death, through a dead landscape:

> Auf gefrorenem Boden hallt unser Schritt hohl
> als gingen wir auf Sargdeckeln riesiger Massengräber.
> Einzeln stossen Strauchstrunke durch den Schnee
> wie Hände eines der noch leben wollte.
> Vielleicht eines meiner getoteten Freunde.
> Bleibt wach! Ihr werdet alle mit uns auferstehen!
> Baumkronen hangen als groteske Fesselballons uber der
> Erde.
> Wegweiser zeigen mit schwarzer Hand
> in unbekannte Tode.[46]

With reference to the Aktion poetry, Patrick Bridgwater suggests that "it is the 'modern attitude' of 'compassionate realism' . . . that comes closest to conveying a true and truly tragic conception of the war."[47] Bridgwater's claim may be valid in general, (although Jon Silkin would probably disagree, since he finds that compassion "works best" when merged with anger[48]) but compassion is not a strong feature in the poetry of the 1914-1916 anthology. In the majority of the poems the speaker is one of the sufferers, so although he may not be without sympathy for his fellows, his compassion is less obvious than if the focus were the misfortune of a third person, "him" or "them," (as it is in many poems of Owen and Sassoon). However, most of the description is impersonal and objective, and observations of human suffering are intermingled with other effects, as though all were of equal value. Rather than speaking as a compassionate observer committed to revealing the suffering of others, the *persona* here, in taking up this non-judgmental attitude, often seems to be intent on distancing himself from the events around him. Although the use of the present tense is obviously only a literary device, and not a reflection of the author's actual situation, it nevertheless reinforces the impression of the poet as a detached observer--in Plagge's poem, for instance--by suggesting a bystander so removed from the activity around him that he is able to record it contemporaneously.

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[46] Pfemfert, p. 47.
[47] Bridgwater, pp. 164-65.
[48] Penguin, p. 28.

It is possible that the *Aktion* poets who used the technique of compiling "isolated and irrelevant sensory detail" intended that their fragmented description should work as implicit protest. Certainly it helps to underline the contrast between, on the one hand, the combatants' perception of war as governed by chance rather than by purpose, and, on the other, the intensity of meaning placed upon it by the tenets of patriotism. However, other factors are probably more important in dictating the style which these writers developed. Their technique differs only quantatively from that used in many pre-war Expressionist poems, which similarly list apparently random observations of a scene--for instance, Georg Trakl's "Im Winter":

> Der Acker leuchtet weiss und kalt.
> Der Himmel ist einsam und ungeheuer.

Dohlen kreisen über dem Weiher
Und Jager steigen nieder vom Wald[49]

or Ernst Stadler's "Judenviertel in London":

Gestank von faulem Fleisch und Fischen klebt an
Wånden.
Süsslicher Brodem trånkt die Luft, die leise nachtet.
Ein altes Weib scharrt Abfall ein mit gierigen
Hånden.[50]

Equipped with what had proved itself an appropriate technique for "realistic" description, German combatant-poets of an Expressionist bent were able, right from the beginning of the war, to embark on the process of examining through poetry the nature of the "strange and extraordinary" reality around them. Their poetry was not necessarily "anti-Krieg," as Pfemfert designated it, and as critics have usually assumed.[51] Nor is it simply that their anger against the war "sublimiert in traurigem und resignierenden Pessimismus," as Wandrey suggests.[52] Rather, the process of listing their reactions to the "disorder" around them, its anomalies, its surprises, ("Man weiss plötzlich nicht, warum das Korn hier nicht geschnitten ist und die Kartoffeln faulen," observes Plagge in "Die Schlacht"), its unpleasantness and, occasionally, its horrors, is an attempt to "impose meaning," to find "pattern and significance," in the world of chaos which presents itself to their senses.

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[49] Die Dichtungen (Salzburg: Otto Müller, 1938), p. 34.

[50] Der Aufbruch (Leipzig: Verlag der Weissen Bücher, 1914), p. 67.

[51] Bridgwater makes that assumption (p. 163), and Wandrey argues against studies by Eva Kolinsky and Herwig Denker which take for granted the "kriegskritisch" intent of the Aktion poets (p. 225, pp. 237a-241).

[52] Wandrey, p. 244.

VII. Non-Realstic Protest Poetry

Although realism has an important place in the protest against the war and the myth, its function, it is clear, is frequently "personal" rather than "public." Critics who assume realistic poetry to have been written primarily as a means of informing the "civilian world" of the "facts" may have prejudged the author's intention and, accordingly, have misinterpreted his poem. They may also have placed too much emphasis on the value of realism as a protest device, at the expense of other factors. Certainly there is little indication in criticism of the English war poetry that a considerable number of protest poets made no use of the representation of "observable realities" in their anti-war statements. Yet in Bertram Lloyd's two protest anthologies, _Poems Written During the Great War 1914-1918_ and _The Paths of Glory_, published in 1918 and 1919 respectively, "realists" are decidedly in the minority. Of the more than fifty poems in each volume, only about a dozen could be regarded as an attempt to familiarise readers with some aspect of the reality of life at the Front, and, in each case, several of those are from one author, Sassoon. Amongst the remaining poems, there is a preponderance of what Hamburger describes, with reference to Trakl, as "archetypal rather than phenomenal" imagery.[1] Much of it is "apocalyptic," depicting monstrous or demonic beings, biblical and classical prototypes of evil, war and death, or pageant-like scenes after the manner of Brueghel or Bosch. There is also a sprinkling of more commonplace representative figures such as mothers, peasants and exploiters. Imagery of the same kind is prevalent in protest poetry of the other two languages--in Kolbenheyer's Leviathan in "1915," in Hugo Ball's "Totentanz," and in Maurice Pottecher's "Le Point de vue des corbeaux," for instance.

"Realistic" poets who wish to use their writing to protest against the war usually construct a verbal "world of reality" which they measure against some aspect of the patriotic-heroic myth. The "apocalyptic" or "visionary" writers' approach is to create an image which reveals the traditional attitude towards war, or the war's effect on humanity, in its true light. T. W. Earp demonstrates the pointlessness and irrelevance of the war by ascribing its origin to three ancient kings, Arthur, Charlemagne and Barbarossa, playing a game of dice.[2] Margaret Sackville's "pageant of triumphant War" is an endless procession led by the magnificent but masked figure of War, followed by his emissaries and the "pitiful, bright army of the dead" down a startlingly white road, made from the dust of trampled bones.[3] Osbert Sitwell, under the pseudonym "Miles," presents a "modern Abraham" who has happily given his son's life for the country--and made his fortune in manufacturing armaments,[4] while Albert Ehrenstein calls up Nordic rather than biblical myths in "Menschendämmerung"--

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[1] Truth of Poetry, p. 172.

[2] Lloyd, Paths, p. 51.

> Umtost vom vaterländischen Geheul
> Der westlichen Wilden auf ihrem Kriegspfad,
> Hager wie einer, der die Norne umarmt hat,
> Erbleicht der Held, ihn bedrängt
> Im unauslöffelbaren Kessel die Blutsuppe.[5]

The sense of animosity is almost as prevalent in "visionary" as in "realistic" poetry. Franz Werfel implies in "Die Wortemacher des Krieges" that pro-war propagandists speak for the worst side of human nature, "das Geziefer" which escapes "befreit und jauchzend" from the ruins of "des Geistes Haus" at the outbreak of war; his attack is no less offensive than the direct insults which Mackintosh offers to civilians in "Recruiting."[6] The alien "they" appear in Maximilian Rosenberg's "Der Tibetgott" as the priests responsible for starting "Krieg um Krieg," in a vain attempt to satisfy their god; they are the subject of Osbert Sitwell's "Sheep-Song," "stampeding to end stampedes," and are the reason why five representative workers from different parts of Europe, in W. N. Ewer's "Five Souls," have been killed in the war, for, as each explains,

> I gave my life for freedom--This I know:

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[3] Pageant, pp. 9-21.

[4] Lloyd, Poems, p. 74.

[5] Der Mensch schreit (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff, 1916; rpt. Nendeln: Kraus, 1973), p. 41.

[6] Einander, p. 50.

For those who bade me fight had told me so."[7]

The language of "visionary" poetry is often "high-sounding," even biblical (or at least ecclesiastical)--"Our world beyond a year of dread / Has paled like Babylon or Rome," "Thou art the Disillusioner. Thy words / Are desolate winds and jagged spurs of rock," "Hőhnisch, erbarmungslos, / Gnadenlos starren die Wände der Welt."[8] The recurrent persona is a prophet who, in contrast with the involved observer-spokesman in "realistic" protest poetry, is detached from events, to the extent that he (or she, since many poems of this kind were written by women) is able to place them in a cosmic perspective. Many of the "visionary" poems are concerned with the war as a temporal unit, an element in the total history of human development. For example, Dora Sigerson deplores the futility of all the "Shouting and crying, / Sobbing and dying," because, in the words of the "old proverb" which she quotes, "It will be all the same in a thousand years."[9] Laurence Housman in "Caesar's Image" and "The Brand of Cain" notes the constant recurrence of the attitudes which bring about war.[10] Wilfred Owen, through a speaker in one of his few "visionary" poems, "Strange Meeting" (an encounter in hell between two men who had recently fought each other), expresses concern that, because the war will have killed the few individuals who might have told "the truth," in the future "None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress."[11]

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[7] Rosenberg, "Der Tibetgott," Umwelt, Die Aktionslyrik, 6 (Berlin-Wilmersdorf, 1919), p. 23; Sitwell, "Sheepsong," Lloyd, Paths, p. 109; Ewer, Five Souls and Other War-time Verses (London: The Herald, 1917), pp. 5-6.

[8] "A.E.," "Apocalyptic, 1915," Lloyd, Paths, p. 19; E.H.Visiak, "The Pacifist," Lloyd, Poems, p. 106; Franz Werfel, "Krieg," Einander, p. 47.

[9] "An Old Proverb," Lloyd, Paths, p. 104.

[10] Lloyd, Poems, pp. 60-61, p. 56.

A significant number of poets use neither "apocalyptic" visions nor "realistic" pictures to make their anti-war protest. Instead, they stage their attack upon the myth and its perpetuators by presenting an argument against them, as if they were participating in a (usually vociferous) debate. The prophet persona of visionary poetry and the observer-spokesman of the realistic writing are superseded here by a "soap-box orator." While all the protest poetry has something of the manner of public speaking, the "debate" kind is especially declamatory. Many poems are distinctly harangue-like--Arcos' "À la memoire d'un ami," for example--

> O colère et viril anathème! Que n'ai-je
> Vingt poings pour vous frapper,
> Vingt voix pour vous maudire,
> . . .
> Vous qui l'avez voulu, vous qui l'avez cherché,
> Vous qui n'avez rien fait non plus pour l'empêcher,

J.M.Renaitour's "Tuer"--

> Tuer! Toujours tuer! Mon Dieu! pourquoi tuai-je?
> Qui vous expiera donc, crimes que je commets?

and Karl Otten's "Fűr Martinet"--

> Es ist Zeit, mein Bruder, alles zu verlassen, hin-
> zuwerfen Zweifel auf Eid, Lust auf Begierde,
> Klugheit auf Witz.[12]

Admittedly there are "debate" poems in which a calmer, more meditative tone prevails, such as Arcos' "Les Morts" and Owen's "Insensibility" and "Apologia Pro Poemate Meo." However, even there the rhetorical manner is close at hand, and the line "But cursed are dullards whom no cannon stuns," from "Insensibility," for all that it is singularly effective poetry, is declamatory enough for any "tub-thumper."

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[11] Collected Poems, p. 35.

[12] Sang des autres, p. 76; Poètes contre, p. 116; Thronerhebung, p. 17.

As befits their oratorical role, many of the poets who rely on direct argument advocate a political solution to humanity's problems. Much more than the "realists," who tend to concentrate on the effect of the war on individuals, or the "visionary" poets, whose perspective is cosmic, the "debaters" are concerned with classes and nations, and the need to destroy the concept of nationalism. The "debate" approach seems to have been favoured by writers with an _a priori_ commitment to internationalism, whether in the form of the pan-European ideals of the "Unanimistes" and others--Jules Romains, Arcos, Albert Ehrenstein, J. R. Becher, for example--or the more practical politics of the international Socialist movement, as in the case of Martinet, Georges Bannerot and Otten. All of them recognise that the myth which upholds nationalism is incompatible with their cause. They call for unity amongst those opposed to war, and especially amongst people committed to Socialism, while pledging the overthrow of the enemy which uses the war to maintain the political and social _status quo_.

Perhaps because many of the "debate" poets are seeking to replace one ideal with another, their poetry seems to be especially close to patriotic verse. Mackintosh, in "Recruiting," draws such a strong "black and white" delineation between soldiers and civilians that he creates a new myth, in urging the recruits to "Come and learn / To live and die with honest men."[13] Yvan Goll's ideal of international brotherhood is also based on a belief in the inherent goodness of men, an attitude which can make no allowance for the idiosyncrasies of individuals, such as one finds in some of the "realistic" poetry. Like the patriotic writers, "debate" poets avoid the specific and particular, preferring plural forms and collective terms--"meine Mitmenschen," "Waisenkinder," "Ceux qui sont morts," "The young men of the world." The opening lines of Goll's "Elegie für die Ausziehenden,"

> O ihr hymnischen Menschen, Jünglinge meiner Zeit:
> Warum beraubt ihr die Erde von eurer Herrlichkeit?

show how closely the combination of a rhetorical manner, high-sounding language, and the proclivity for idealised generalisation links some kinds of protest poetry to patriotic verse, and how easily grandiloquent words become dissociated from the reality to which they supposedly refer.

A major distinction between even the most high-sounding debate poetry and patriotic verse lies in the fact that the former is almost invariably spoken through an "I" voice. This first person singular persona lends to the poet's argument a strong sense of personal conviction, and it is an important factor in his attempt to persuade. Like their patriotic counterparts, poets who voiced their antagonism to the myth and its upholders established through their poetry their public and personal identity. If they were non-combatants, whether by chance or on principle, their poetry represented a contribution to their cause, as well as a justification for their non-combatant status. For the soldier-poets their public declaration of opposition may have been a means of appeasing a conscience troubled by killing, or, since many of the combatant protest poets were officers, it may have served to counter the knowledge that they were contributing, however reluctantly, to the suffering of the men under their command. Civilians or combatants, their stand placed them in an isolated and vulnerable position, exemplified in Richard Fischer's image of the new hero--

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[13] Gardner, p. 112.

> Ein "Held"--Der wäre ein Held,
> Der auf dem Blutfeld, riesig allein, breitbeinig sich stellt
> Und, bis zum Zerspringen, wie ein Brückenbogen gespannt,
> Schrie, dass es gellt,
> Nach beiden Seiten gewandt
> Schrie in die trugverfratzten oder angstschweigenden Züge,
> Statt "Hurrah" schriee "Lüge, Lüge, Lüge"!![14]

The protesting "voice," whether "prophet," observer-spokesman or "soap-box" orator, spoke as a person possessed of special knowledge or insight, which it was his or her responsibility to spread, and that persona was an echo of the poet's actual position in society. Those--"a few alone amid the mass of men"--who tried to uncover the deception perpetrated in the cause of war ran the risk of being branded as "liars and iniquitous" or "At best as fibreless fools."[15]

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[14] "Feld der Ehre," Schrei, p.11.

The "I" voice which urges upon its readers (one is tempted to say "listeners") in direct argument its international or anti-war views persuades by the depth and sincerity of its convictions. The first person singular persona is an important tool for "realistic" poets, too, though for a somewhat different reason. They speak for the most part as combatants, and their "I" voice brings the credibility of direct observation, for, as all story-tellers know, the account of a first-person observer or participant is accepted most readily as true. It is important for the effectiveness of their propaganda that the "truth" which they juxtapose against the myth should seem to exist in the empirical world, not merely in the "poetic" world of the text. The use of an "I" persona which can be equated with the poet's self is a potential link between the two worlds. Most readers, including critics, make such an identification of persona and poet very readily, to the extent that, as Joseph Cohen has pointed out, some criticism is more concerned with the poets' heroism than with their poetry.[16]

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[15] Anon., from "Europe--1916," Lloyd, Poems, p. 16.

[16] "The War Poet as Archetypal Spokesman," Stand, 4 (1960), pp. 23-27.

However, an entirely fictional "I" voice can be equally effective, as Karl Stamm demonstrates through his "Soldat vor dem Gekreuzigten."[17] This convincing anti-war argument, a first-person account of a soldier's struggle with his conscience after killing an enemy, was written by a Swiss soldier whose closest encounter with combat was a border patrol. Not all fictional "I" *personae* are so successful; E. W. Tennant's "The Mad Soldier," for example, suffers as a result of the poet's attempt to imitate the speech mannerisms of his "other ranks" *persona*.[18] ("Other ranks" poets were usually at pains to write their mother-tongue correctly.) On the whole, the use of an obviously fictional "I" voice is not common in the protest poetry, except when the usage is in some way ironic, as in Sassoon's "The Major" and "Memorial Tablet," Owen's "A Terre," or Lichtenstein's "Gebet vor der Schlacht."

The "we" voice so popular in patriotic poetry has a much smaller role in the protest writing. Although not uncommon in the "visionary" type of poetry, the usage is incidental rather than central, and the voice speaks for humanity in general, not for one nation aligned against others. However, a divisive "we" is sometimes used to emphasise the new alignment which the war has engendered, as in Henry-Jacques' book-title "Nous... de la guerre," or in Ernst

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[17] Stamm, *Aufbruch*, pp. 33-44. Biographical information from Stamm, *Die Dichtungen* (Zürich: Rascher, 1920), II, 184-185.

[18] Gardner, p. 131.

Toller's "Marschlied," where "wir" introduces seven of the twelve lines. The repetition underlines the distinction between the men going to be sacrificed and all other people:

Wir Wandrer zum Tode,
Der Erdnot geweiht,
Wir kranzlose Opfer,
Zu Letztem bereit,

. . .

Wir Tränen der Frauen,
Wir lichtlose Nacht,
Wir Waisen der Erde
Ziehn stumm in die Schlacht.[19]

Oskar Kanehl and A.P.Herbert state even more explicitly their protest against the "non-reader" who stands in opposition to "us," in lines like these from "Soldatenmisshandlung"--

Im Federbett drängt sich der Bürger,
damit er nochmal müde wird,
an seine Frau. Indes wir in Sankt Barbara,
der kühlen, stramm unsern Dienst tun--Gottesdienst--

or these from "After the Battle," with their deliberate "you"/"us" alternation--

You will come up in your capacious car
To find your heroes sulking in the rain,
To tell us how magnificent we are,
And how you hope we'll do the same again.[20]

Far more frequently, however, protest poets speak for themselves, rather than collectively.

In contrast with the international homogeneity in patriotic verse, there appear to be distinct national preferences within the three categories of protest poetry. Sustained "apocalyptic" images, in poems spoken through a "prophet," are less common in French than in the other two languages, and--surprisingly, in view of their almost total neglect by critics--especially popular in English. On the other hand, outright political harangues, particularly appreciated by the French, find little favour in English, although there are exceptions, such as Sassoon's "Great Men"--

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[19] Toller, p. 10.

[20] Kanehl, Schande, p. 8; Herbert, The Bomber Gipsy (London: Methuen, 1918), p. 21.

> The great ones of the earth
> Approve, with smiles and bland salutes, the rage
> And monstrous tyranny they have brought to birth.
>
> You Marshals, gilt and red,
> You Ministers, and Princes, and Great Men,
> Why can't you keep your mouthings for the dead?[21]

The French writers by and large seem to shy away form representing "observable realities," preferring to make their point intellectually, by argument, rather than by the "show-and-tell" method. The German protest poets often combine the role of "visionary" with that of declamatory and committed orator, perhaps in keeping with the early Expressionist view of the writer as "a messianic figure who would usher in a regeneration of society,"[22] On the other hand, many German poems feature instead a deliberately uncommitted persona, the detached recipient of chance visual and auditory impressions, which combine to form a

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[21] Lloyd, Paths, p. 93. "Great Men" was not reprinted in any collection of Sassoon's poetry.

[22] Helmut Gruber, The Politics of German Literature 1914 to 1933 (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1980), p. 9.

"realistic"--and therefore possibly anti-war--picture. By contrast, in the English "realistic" poetry the persona usually makes clear his role as "pleader" (to borrow Owen's term[23]), the protest is generally explicit, and there is nothing accidental in the choice of detail.

A convention which seems to appeal almost exclusively to English writers is the juxtaposing of a short narrative concerning a specified individual against some aspect of the myth. In such cases the persona is an observer-narrator, and his subject is usually treated in the third person. To demonstrate the foolishness of describing a soldier as a "happy warrior," Herbert Read depicts one such man, whose "wild heart beats with painful sobs" while "Bloody saliva / Dribbles down his shapeless jacket," and of whom the speaker recounts, "I saw him stab / And stab again / A well-killed Boche."[24] H.F.Constantine in "The Glory of War" links together a series of incidents with ironic comment--

> A lad was shot, just as we started to move forward;
> Perhaps you saw him where he lay, with eyes still
>   open,
> With eyes still looking out upon the world, dazed and
>   horror-struck.
> There lay a hero--who did not want to die.[25]

Wilfred Owen often narrates events involving a specific protagonist--"The Sentry," "Dulce et Decorum est," "S.I.W.," "The Deadbeat," to name only a few examples. Robert Graves uses a similar approach in "The Leveller," and adds credibility to this tale of how "Two men were struck by the same shell" by introducing a place-name--"Near Martinpuisch."[26]

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[23] Letters, p. 580.
[24] "The Happy Warrior," Naked Warriors, p. 26.
[25] Lloyd, Paths, p. 38.

This technique of demonstrating by a narrated incident the inadequacy of the myth is far less popular in the other two languages. However, one finds a similar practice occasionally; for instance, Piscator in "Der Mutter zweier Sőhne, welche fielen" focuses on a specific person, fully visualised in such detail as the "ganz schmal gewordenes Gesicht und die műden, műden Hánde," and Henry-Jacques juxtaposes the narrative of a particular incident against the edict that "Mourir, c'est le sort le plus beau" in "Les Martyrs."[27] Martinet's "Celui-là" is one of that author's few attempts to use the same approach--on the whole, he prefers the general to the specific, and argument to demonstration--but this account of the death of a friend falls short of providing the "sensory details" which would make it fully convincing.[28] For example, when the speaker tells how his friend used to be--"Comme il était fort. Et fier. Et joyeux. Et brave"--one is reminded more of the idealised young men in, say, Laurence Binyon's "For the Fallen," who are described as "True of eye, straight of limb, steady and aglow," than of Sassoon's "Young Gibson, with his grin, and Morgan, tired and white," or Read's decidedly non-courageous Cornelius Vane.[29] In attempting to bring home to the reader the physical reality of his friend's suffering--

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[26] Country Sentiment, p. 76.

[27] Piscator, Pfemfert, p. 92; Henry-Jacques, Nous...., p. 83.

[28] Martinet, pp. 81-82.

Et la plaie s'envenimait toujours.
Il a fallu couper une seconde fois, plus haut,
Dans cette chair encore vivante--

Martinet has so little confidence in the strength of his realistic picture that he adds

La chair, vous savez, comme la vôtre,
Comme la vôtre, guerriers des journaux, vous sentez?

As Martinet's urging suggests, an important aspect of the "demonstration" type of poetry is its aim of promoting empathy with the sufferers, to reinforce the intellectual argument against the myth. Compassion has a role in all of the protest poetry, but this kind relies particularly heavily on the direct emotional appeal of its "phenomenal" imagery, in countering the "empty" language of heroism and patriotism. The more sympathy the poet can evoke, the more effective is his propaganda. To focus on an individual, a specific, identified person, or on an incident which the author is obviously able to visualise (since he represents it as a recollection), is to give the poem something of the verisimilitude of a newspaper report, and, accordingly, to convince the reader that the suffering caused by the war happens to "real-life" people. Since English and German poets were equally committed to realism, it is difficult to explain why this particularly effective protest device should have developed in the one language and not in the other. A possible explanation lies in the failure of pre-war English poetry to evolve adequate means of dealing with the unpleasant reality of modern life. The Aktion poets came to the war with a prescribed technique, their inheritance from Stadler, Trakl and Jakob van Hoddis, while the English poets, dependant still on the Victorian literary tradition, had to create their own. The German realistic war-poetry is reminiscent of pointillism, a painting technique developed by the relatively modern and experimental artists of the Impressionist movement (though less radically experimental than their "Modernist" counterparts in the early twentieth-century, whose techniques are paralleled in the poetry of August Stramm and Apollinaire). The realism of the English writers, on the other hand--coherent, anecdotal, "life-like"--reminds one rather of traditional nineteenth-century paintings like those of Courbet or Ford Maddox Brown. Yet this precise and "old-fashioned" kind of realism seems to be exactly what is needed to balance against the abstract, "high-sounding" words of the myth, replacing their long-lost direct referential significance with new, ironic meaning.

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[29] Binyon, p. 43; Sassoon, "Twelve Months After," War Poems, p. 68; Read, "The Execution of Cornelius Vane," Naked Warriors, pp. 39-46.

No study of the war poetry would be complete without a comment on "pity," which, like realism, has received considerable attention from critics. Taking up Owen's sentence, "The Poetry is in the pity,"[30] they usually equate pity with compassion.[31] However, as Owen uses the term, "pity" is not an emotion experienced by the poet, but an impersonal and abstract quality, a "fact" to which the poet's expression gives permanence, as he indicates in "Strange Meeting," through the words of a man lamenting his unfulfilled life:

> For of my glee might many men have laughed,
> And of my weeping something have been left
> Which must die now. I mean the truth untold,
> The pity of war, the pity war distilled.[32]

This abstract, detached kind of pity, of which compassion is only the original inspiration, infuses some of the most impressive poetry of the war. Georges Duhamel's "Ballade de Florentin Prunier" tells, totally without sentimentalism, of the slow death of a wounded man, while his mother sits patiently by his side willing him to live.[33] The poem conveys the author's profound respect for those who suffer, and a recognition of the importance, yet the futility, of such small measures as ordinary people can take in the face of the massive destruction brought about by the war. Pity, in Owen's sense, emanates from Rosenberg's "Dead Man's Dump," from Trakl's "Grodek," and from lines like "Mordesmorde / blinzen / Kinderaugen" in Stramm's

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[30] "Preface," Collected Works p. 31.

[31] For example, "a deeply-felt pity for others," (Welland, p. 60); "compassion or pity" (Silkin, Out of Battle, p. 207); "a compassionate understanding" (Lane, p. 12).

[32] Collected Poems, p. 36.

[33] Duhamel, Elégies (Paris: Mercure de France, 1920), pp. 75-79.

"Schlachtfeld." Owen's "Futility" registers much more than compassion for the man who died, or for those who survive; rather, it tells of the unbelievable totality of death, and the sadness of what Rosenberg calls "half-used lives."[34] The opening stanza of Karl von Eisenstein's "Tod" captures accurately the pity of one such loss of life:

> Er ist tot.
> Alle seine tausend Hoffnungen
> Sind in den kalten harten Wintermorgen
> Hinausgeflattert
> An dem er fiel.
> In alle Winde hinaus.
> Keiner fängt sie mehr ein.[35]

However, neither compassion nor the more abstract quality, pity, is a protest device *per se*. As Silkin recognises in connection with Owen's writing, compassion "can tend to self-indulgence," and may be "manipulated by warmongers."[36] Certainly one finds compassion and pity in patriotic poems--in Friedrich Lienhard's "Soldatenzug aus Erfurt," for example, in the acknowledgement that the joyfully departing young men--

> Diese braunroten Männer,
> Deutschlands kräftige Jugend,
> Die singend hinauszieht,

are going "In die Schlacht, in den Tod!"[37] There is at least a hint of pity, too, in Binyon's "For the Fallen," in the lines

> They mingle not with their laughing comrades again,
> They sit no more at the familiar tables of home,

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[34] "Dead Man's Dump," *Collected Works*, p. 110..
[35] *Lieder im Kampf* (Berlin: Bachmair, n.d.), p.34.
[36] *Penguin*, p. 29.
[37] Lienhard, pp. 38-39.

although it is easily outweighed by the consolation inherent in the myth, the "music in the midst of desolation."[38] Even the combination of pity and anger which Silkin and Hamburger identify in the poetry that "works best" is not confined to the protest writing.[39] Several of Jean Aicard's poems are decidedly Victorian "realistic" narratives designed to arouse compassion, but at the same time to generate animosity against the Germans. In a sense they bear more similarity to the technique of Owen and Sassoon than does most of the protest writing in French, especially since, atypically for patriotic verse, they focus on a single incident or individual, such as "Le Jeune Héros de quatorze ans, Emile Desjardins."[40] An even more direct counterpart of the English writers' technique is to be found amongst the Belgian patriotic poetry, for example, in A. Marcel's story of "Une dentellière," an old woman who stoically leaves her home before the attacking forces, taking only "son vieux carreau de dentellière." Like Owen in "Dulce et Decorum Est," Marcel adds a comment to ensure that that the pity serves its true purpose:

> Je vous raconte ce départ
> Pour que chacun puisse comprendre
> Qu'on ne detruira ni la Flandre
> Ni son dur travail, ni son Art![41]

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[38] Binyon, p. 43.

[39] [In Owen's poetry] "The compassion works best when it is in active co-operation wit his anger and satire," Penguin , p. 28; "the sharp edge of pity and anger," Truth of Poetry , p. 192.

[40] Turpin, ed. Poèmes I, 6-8.

[41] "La Dentellière," Bernard et Buissonville, eds., Poètes-soldats, p. 121.

The distinction lies in the identity of the "non-reader," for while Aicard and Marcel use pity as a weapon to unite their compatriots against the official enemy, Owen and Sassoon and other protest poets, for all that they employ a similar approach, direct their animosity against the new opponents, the people whom they consider incapable of sympathising with those who suffer. Whatever new conventions the protest poetry developed--"apocalyptic" images, gory description, "soap-box" oratory, narratives designed to show up the falsity of the myth--it is the presence of this alien "non-reader," civilian and complacent, which shows most clearly that the poet is voicing his opposition to the war, and not merely reacting (as Yeats suggested), like "the quicksilver at the back of the mirror," to events around him.[42]

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[42] Introduction to The Oxford Book of Modern Verse, 1936 edition. Quoted by Press, p. 147.

VIII. Conclusion

A general study of this kind, approaching a relatively unexplored field, can hope to do no more than examine a few of the more prominent features. Most critics, whether concerned with the poetry of one or of several languages, have seized upon the chronological change in attitude towards the war, the distinction between combatant and civilian poetry, or the work of a few major poets as the most striking aspects. However, none of those features lends itself to the development of a typology which is valid for the poetry at large. The factors which make poets "major" are on the whole uniquely theirs, rather than being held in common with a large number of others. A balanced general view of the literary phenomenon which was Great War poetry has to encompass weak as well as successful work, and must focus on qualities most characteristic of the writing en masse, not on those exclusive to the "best" poets. In this respect, the German poetry--at the hands of Bridgwater, Peacock and Cysarz--has received fairer treatment than the English, where even those critics whose topic is nominally the poetry of the war in general have concentrated almost entirely on the work of no more than eight or nine poets, and mainly on that of Owen, Sassoon and Rosenberg, whose writing, though undoubtedly of a high standard, is by no means typical.

Although there is some value in tracing the change in attitude towards the war and the myth which is evident in the poetry, and in grouping the poems accordingly, the chronological development from "pro-war" to "anti-war" is not so clear-cut as proponents of the scheme maintain. (Both terms are convenient rather than accurate--few "pro-war" poets explicitly welcomed the war, although most were firmly committed to their country's participation, and much of the so-called "anti-war" poetry is really "anti-myth.") A few pacifist poems date from August 1914, and several fervent protesters were dead before the war was half over--E. A. Mackintosh and A. G. West, for example, and Alfred Lichtenstein, killed in its second month. Conversely, some poets remained high-minded supporters of their nation's cause, even after their encounter with the reality of life at the Front, and many were never expressly either "pro"- or "anti"-war. The tendency to distinguish between "soldier-poets" and others as a means of grouping is also problematic. The "obvious difference" which Patrick Bridgwater finds between "the war-sickened front-line poet and the pacifist intellectual writing his anti-war satires from the safe distance of, say, Zurich," is not always evident in their poetry.[1] Kurt Tucholsky and Osbert Sitwell, both authors of anti-war satire, were combatants; several of

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[1] Bridgwater, p. 181.

Wilfred Owen's poems give no indication that their writer was on active service; Otten and Martinet, on the evidence of their poetry, could as easily have been combatants as civilians. A further problem lies in deciding at what point a poet becomes a "soldier-poet"--whether he assumes that role upon enlistment, or only after his first encounter with "real war," or whether the designation works retroactively, so that all his war-time poetry, including that written from a civilian perspective, is considered as the work of a "soldier-poet."

It is clear that the "prominent features" upon which the majority of critics have focused their attention are not necessarily those which describe and explain the poetry in general most adequately. An aspect which has been largely overlooked is the strong propagandist element common to the "pro-war" and "anti-war" writing; from the recognition of this similarity to the division of the poetry into propagandist or "public" and non-propagandist or "personal" is a logical step. A propagandist intent may be presumed when the persona is a spokesman pleading a cause, and when the poem posits an alignment between an implied reader inclined towards the speaker's viewpoint, and a deliberately-excluded "non-reader." This, perhaps, is what Hamburger means by the term "structure" when he writes that the distinction between "public" and "private" poetry lies in "the relationship between poet and reader posited by the very structure and texture of poems on any subject whatever."[2] The special "texture" of "public" poems is their consistently speech-like manner, involving pleas, invocations, hyperbole, "high-sounding phrases," exclamations, rhetorical questions and all possible devices of direct public address. To the latter one must add, in the case of a considerable amount of the poetry of the war, various methods of conveying disrespect, such as sarcasm and invective. In the present study "structure" is more important than "texture" (if the two are separable), in delineating between "public" and "personal" writing. It should be noted that this use of the term "personal" is not identical with Hamburger's, since the latter refers only to poetry which is hermetic and formally experimental. Neither does the distinction put forward by C. M. Bowra between poetry which "deals with events which concern a large number of people," and that which "deals with the special, individual activity of the self" hold good for the two groups in the present application.[3] As the terms are used here, the same event--a bombardment, for example--could serve poets of both categories equally well. A "personal" writer might use it as the basis of an "exploratory" poem, trying to define the anomalies of the situation, or exploring to the full the potential of words for conveying an image, while for a "public" poet it could provide material for propaganda against the patriotic-heroic myth.

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[2] Truth of Poetry, p. 201.
[3] Poetry and Politics, p. 2.

The single factor which characterises most strongly the propagandist poetry of the Great War is the implied or explicit attitude of animosity. The prevalence of this characteristic in propanda verse of other periods is impossible to assess without further study. No doubt a war situation exaggerates the sense of enmity, but it may be argued that propaganda for one cause invariably implies a degree of animosity towards supporters of the opposing doctrine, and therefore that it always works by strengthening the opinion of the like-minded while deliberately excluding others. However, whether or not this hypothesis is valid in general, the recognition that enmity inspires the protest poetry of the war to as great an extent as it affects the patriotic writing is important. It enables one to pinpoint the fallacy in the accepted view that the protest writers were speaking to the "millions at home," a view belied by the empirical evidence that their published work can have reached only a very limited number of people, chiefly through small-circulation magazines. It is not difficult, however, to appreciate how the misunderstanding arises, since the poets themselves often exhibit a duality of purpose, expressing the intention of speaking to a wide audience ("in die Welt schrein," as Richard Fischer phrases it), yet writing in a manner intended to disturb or offend all but a small group of initiates. Interestingly enough, although much of the protest poetry seems to continue the pre-war habit of deliberately provoking respectable citizens by using non-traditional verse forms and "non-poetic" language, the poets who before the war had been most experimental did not, on the whole, engage in the writing of anti-war or anti-myth propaganda, but opted for a response which must be classified as "personal."

The effect of placing all the propaganda poetry in a single category, instead of following the usual approach of assuming total dissimilarity between patriotic and protest writing, has been to emphasise aspects which otherwise have received relatively little attention. For example, one is especially impressed by the degree to which the so-called "anti-war" poetry is directed against the glorification of war through the patriotic-heroic myth, rather than against war *per se*. In particular, many protest writers condemn poets and other manipulators of words, who have perpetuated the "lies" responsible for convincing others that participation in war is noble and worthwhile. In doing so, they pretend that they are replacing the "Sturm von falschen Worten" with a non-verbal "truth," and indeed one is aware, in reading many of their poems, of a link between the words and empirical reality which is unusually strong for lyric poetry. However, the idealism-realism dichotomy which some critics (J. M. Gregson, for instance) have drawn from the "pro-war" and "anti-war" poetry is not valid, for idealism is as rife in the latter as in the former. While protest poetry, in the words of John Masters, quoted earlier, "has no reverence" for the old causes and ideals of the myth, it shows considerable reverence for new ideals of humanism, international brotherhood, and the quest for world peace.

In the process of examining the "function" of the poetry, one comes to understand its limitations as an indicator of contemporary social attitudes in general. Because of the enormous amount of patriotic verse in all three languages, it would be easy to conclude that the young men who volunteered for the war were inspired by patriotism. In actuality they were probably motivated at least as much by a sense of adventure and the promise of new experiences, by contagious excitement and what is now called "peer-group pressure," and no doubt in some case they were inspired, as Isaac Rosenberg was, by the chance to relieve their extreme poverty by "taking the King's shilling." Patriotic poetry--as the comparison with the poetry of courtly love helps make clear--was an end in itself rather than a prelude to physical commitment. Even so, it served an important social function, in allowing authors to make their personal contribution to the country's cause, in giving publishers the satisfaction of knowing that they, too, had contributed, and in providing readers with an appropriately uplifting experience, while reinforcing their determination to continue their vicarious defence of the homeland--and incidentally of the social status quo --to the bitter end.

As a sociological indicator, the protest poetry of the war must also be treated with caution. The emphasis placed by recent criticism (especially in English) on the work of a few "anti-war" poets, and the undoubted power of their writing, might give the impression that they were the voice of a strong protest movement. In fact, although the majority of soldiers would no doubt have joined in their _plainte_, there is no indication that poetry helped to inspire the few anti-war demonstrations which occurred in the countries under discussion. At the same time, the writing, publishing and even reading of "seditious" material is in itself an act of protest, so the poetry undoubtedly served a social purpose, and despite (or perhaps because of) the limitedness of its circulation, it reinforced the sense of division between the "right-thinking" group and the population at large.

Like the realignment of the poetry according to its function, the introduction of an international perspective shows the English writing in a new light. (Since the French and German verse has received considerably less attention from critics, no comparably biased view has become firmly established there.) One sees clearly, for instance, the weakness of the assumption that protest poetry must rely on "crude realism," and, conversely, one appreciates that realism is an "exploratory" as well as a protest device. One finds also that some well-known "atypical" (that is, non-realistic) poems, like Owen's "The Show" and "Strange Meeting," are part of a large body of "visionary" or "apocalyptic" protest poetry--a major feature of the English writing almost totally overlooked by previous critics. The necessity of looking beyond the work of a few well-known poets reveals that the English poetry in general is not so totally a-political as the output of those authors might indicate. W. N. Ewer and J. C. Squire, for example, present in English the left-wing viewpoint characteristic of the protest writing in the other two languages, and many of Eva Gore-Booth's poems touch upon the question of Irish independence. However, there is no denying that French and German writers produced a considerably larger amount of politically-conscious verse.

The differences from one language to another made evident by the international perspective are a particularly interesting aspect of the protest writing. One wonders why so few French poets considered using realism as a protest device, especially since the precedent set by Baudelaire, in creating poetry to deal with the less pleasant aspects of modern life, would seem to place them at an advantage in that respect. Instead, almost without exception they chose an "orator" persona, and set out to convince by argument rather than by demonstrating the reality of war. Possibly they felt that the "ground-level" observation necessary for realistic description was incompatible with the wide perspective of their humanistic ideals. Amongst English poets, on the other hand, the "idealists" tended to choose an elaborate "visionary" image in preference to direct argument, while German writers appear to have been adept in both modes. One senses in the "debate" poems in French and German the influence of Walt Whitman, whose name occurs far more frequently in contemporary literary sources--magazines and letters, for instance--on the Continent than in Engand. Here, possibly, lies a partial explanation for the relative scarcity of protest poems of the "argument" type in English.

The same critical approach which exposes the strong national tendencies in the one type of writing reveals also the extreme international homogeneity of the other kind, patriotic verse. Patriotic poets in all three languages show a similar sense of commitment to a conceptualised country, rather than to the physical place which is their home. They share an unquestioning acceptance of the value of dying in the country's cause, they venerate "the Fallen" in a similar terms, and they believe in the existence of a code of ethics combining heroism, chivalry and martyrdom under the banner of "honour." Their writing is characterised by a proclivity for non-experimental verse forms, a preference for abstractions and a complementary shying away from definite reference and precise description, a dearth of adjectives and of nouns which belong indisputably to the modern age, and a corresponding bent for "high-sounding" and archaic language, relating, though in a superficial way, to the age of chivalry. Almost universally the patriotic poets speak through a "we" persona, a device which implies a unity of opinion between poet and reader based, in Hamburger's words, on "common experience, common attitudes, common knowledge," and which admits of no possible dissent.[4] At the same time it offers a ready means of distinguishing between "us" and the opposing side, and the poetry is characterised by a total lack of accommodation towards the enemy, while the official "black and white" viewpoint is reiterated without question.

However, despite the strong similarities, the juxpaposing of the patriotic verse of one language against the others shows up distinct national differences in general tone. The air of determination which marks the German writing is, perhaps, to be expected in a beleaguered country facing its first major challenge as a unified nation, while the note of confident high-mindedness in the English poetry is an appropriate reflection of the outlook of a people sure of its territorial invulnerability. These may be regarded as two sides of the same coin, for it is easy to imagine that, with the positions reversed, writers in the two countries might develop the other kind of poetic response. The radically different tone of the French writing may result from a military situation in which France was the innocent victim, but it probably owes more to cultural precedent. In part, it originates in the strong tradition in religion and folk-literature of venerating martyrs, even at the expense of more successful "heroes" who managed to survive. Its other main source is probably French classical drama, which emphasises emotion and mental anguish. The indulgence in suffering and the passionate outbursts of righteous indignation which characterise French patriotic verse are not far removed, in manner or language, from, say, some of Phèdre's impassioned speeches.

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[4] Truth of Poetry, p. 202.

The anomaly presented by much of the Belgian patriotic poetry is another phenomenon which calls for explanation. Belgium had in common with France both the role of innocent victim and a shared literary tradition, yet there is little dwelling on the suffering and destruction resulting from the German invasion, no enjoyment of martyrdom, and indignant cries for revenge are less common than a determination to survive which is much more German than French. The crucial difference may lie in the historical situation, but, as always, poetic conventions play their part. Unlike the other countries under consideration, Belgium's entire population, civilian as well as combatant, was affected at first hand by the war. Whether at home or in exile, the poets were aware of the physical devastation, and in it they saw a threat to their entire way of life. Their writing was an act of defiance towards the occupying power, but it was also a means of forging a link between the destroyed past and the future survival of their culture. For example, if Marcel Wyseur wished to convey to future generations an appreciation of the Tour des Templiers at Nieuport--how it looked, its essential "mood," and what it meant to the community--he could not afford to indulge in the meaningless generalisations and "high-sounding" language of typical patriotic verse. Nor, it seems, was there any relevance in dwelling on the unfairness of the situation, or in pouring invective upon the enemy, when the important task was to ensure that Belgian culture continued to exist. For poets in the other countries the writing of patriotic verse was a verbal game comparable to courtly love poetry, and, as far as the French writers were concerned, the "rules" involved discarding recent literary tradition in favour of an older style. (Henri de Regnier's Sites (1887) and 1914-1916 hardly seem to come from the same pen.) The Belgian poets, however, were responding to an urgent reality, and they used the tools with which they were most familiar and which they knew to be effective, namely, the techniques of their strong and recent Symbolist heritage.

Unlike most of the patriotic verse of the war, a considerable number of the Belgian poems--by Verhaeren, Wyseur and Marcel, for instance--remain "readable" (though few appear to have been reprinted). Since by far the larger part of the Great War poetry in general has been deservedly relegated to the shelves of history, it is interesting to speculate on the factors which enable the rest to overcome its "time-bound" nature. Obviously a major role is played by the author's skill in using words, for whatever purpose and whether in traditional or modern verse forms. One can appreciate a writer's ability without subscribing to his view, even to the extent, for instance, of admiring William Watson's invective in "thou Blot / Upon the fair script of

Time, thou sceptred Smear / Across the Day." The majority of poets lacked the creativeness necessary to adapt conventions to their own needs, or to employ words in an original way, and their work had no more than temporary appeal. Oddly enough, conventions "date" the poetry much more readily than specific reference to contemporary events, and the clichés which dominate patriotic verse--and much of the "personal" poetry--were already at the end of their useful life when the war began, a limitation which very few poets were skillful enough to overcome. As for other devices which have contributed to the longevity of some of the poetry, one finds from the Belgian example that the sense of urgency and of "the pity of War" have been communicated across the gap of almost seventy years. Both of these factors are present in the more effective protest poetry, too, and both depend on the reader's being convinced that the words are not merely "Poetry", but that they have or had a referent in the empirical world. The Belgian poems and the protest poetry incorporate two kinds of "realistic" writing--the one, the representation of a pleasant and recollected reality, the other of a harshly unpleasant world; a third kind of "realism" is to be found, ironically enough, in some "visionary" poems, where the image is worked out in detail, and that, too, remains largely "readable,"--an indication that precise imagery may be more appealing to modern audiences than the highly-flown abstractions which were still popular at the beginning of the century.

In theory, because "public" poetry was intended for a specific contemporary audience, changing circumstances have rendered all of it obsolete, for the immediate battles which the propagandists fought were decided long ago. The war ran its course, and the old enmities between countries have become no more than rivalry. Its issues and animosities no longer applicable and its cliché-ridden, conventionalised form completely out of fashion, the patriotic verse has indeed been put away to gather dust, with the exception of a few poems of the "personal" (or at least "pseudo-personal") kind, such as Thomas's "This Is No Case of Petty Right or Wrong," Brooke's "The Soldier" and Hauptmann's "O mein Vaterland." Some of the protest writing, however, continues to be read not only as poetry, but as propaganda--as one may judge from its re-appearance in anthologies like Scott Bates' protest against the Vietnam War, Poems of War Resistance (1969). At the original time of writing, patriotic verse was intended to appeal to a mass audience, and to be all-encompassing within the range of its particular language; protest poetry, on the other hand, aimed to exclude a large number of potential readers by deliberately offending them, or at least by making no attempt to please. The continuing existence of such "non-readers" helps to explain the appeal of Great War protest poetry in modern society, for the same animosities still exist. In the present day, the social norm remains militaristic, and people who are opposed to war and its glorification through the myth, to exploitative patriotism, or even to excessive military spending, feel themselves to be an exclusive minority. The anti-war or anti-myth propaganda poetry, therefore, speaks to them as to its audience of 1917, as an alienated group with special standards. In spite of the Great War, the Second World War, Hiroshima, Vietnam, and all the horrors before and since, the established order still consists of a majority of people who are "non-readers," in both senses, of the poetry of Kanehl, Chennevière, Goll, Owen and Sassoon, and many of the issues raised by that poetry remain as relevant, and as urgent, as when it was written.

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APPENDIX

Julius Bab, 1914: Der deutsche Krieg im deutschen Gedicht

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